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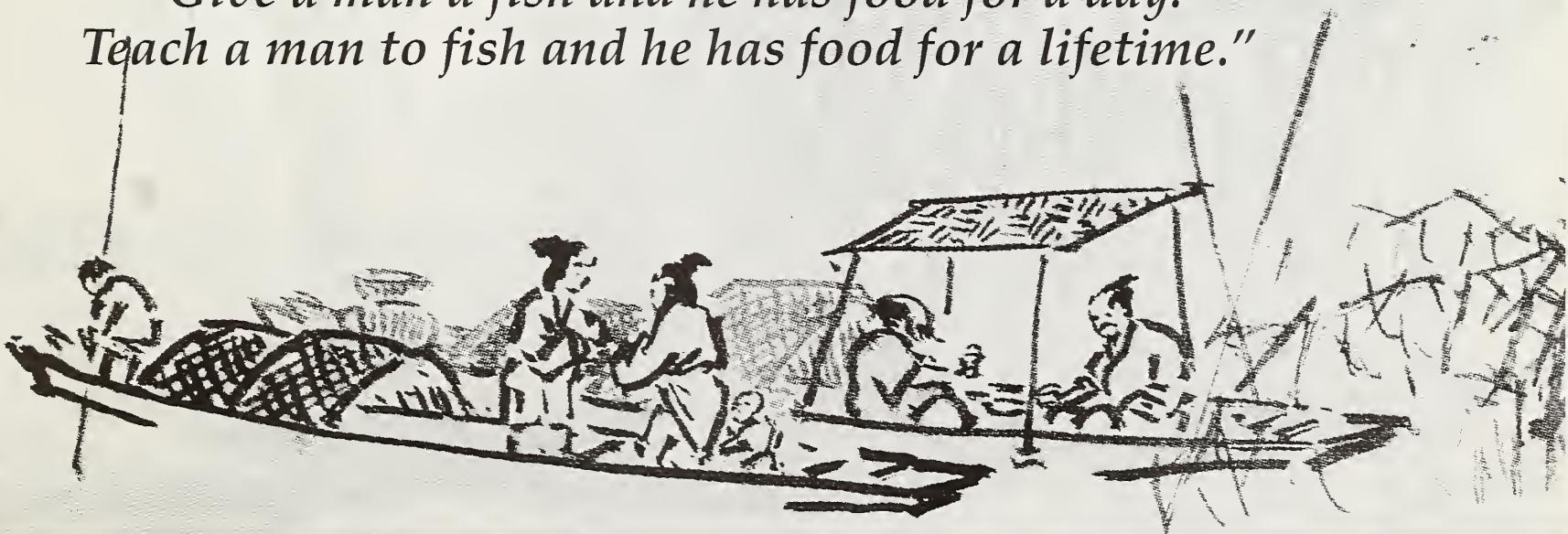
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Helping People Help Themselves

*"Give a man a fish and he has food for a day.
Teach a man to fish and he has food for a lifetime."*



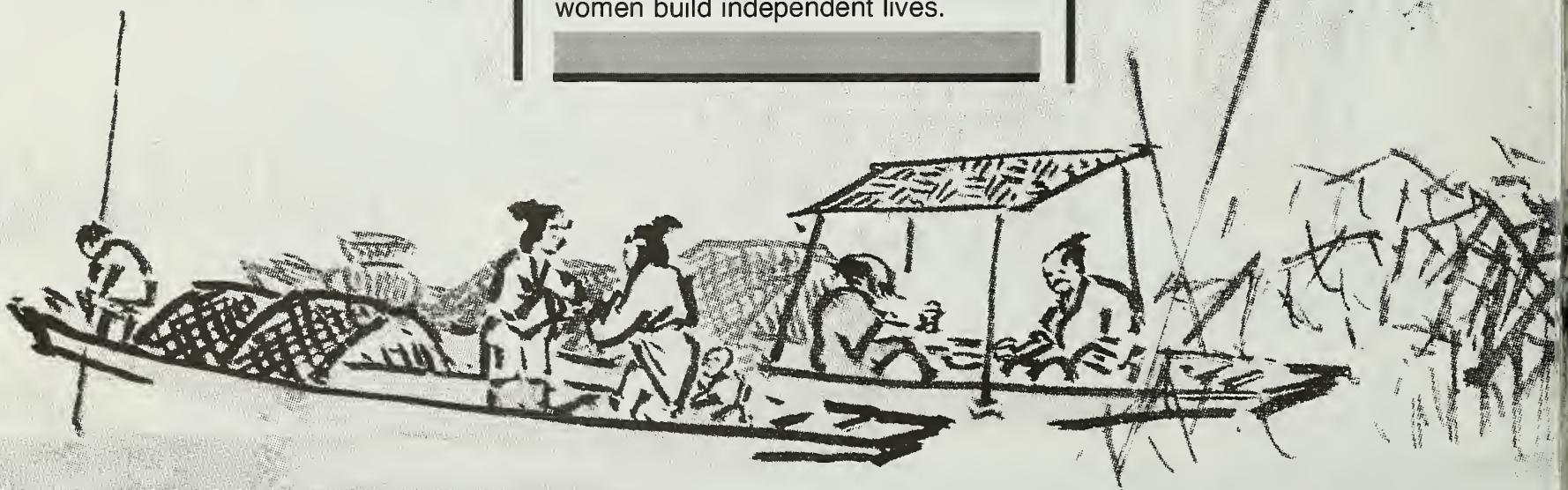
An ancient Chinese proverb says, "Give a man a fish and he has food for a day. Teach a man to fish and he has food for a lifetime."

This same philosophy underlies the current interest in "welfare reform" and the growing consensus in our country that people benefit most when they are helped to help themselves.

The food assistance programs are central to efforts to help public aid recipients become self-reliant. The Food Stamp Program—USDA's largest and most extensive food program—has had built-in work incentives for some time. Now, under strengthened program rules, all states are operating employment and training (E & T) programs for food stamp participants.

During fiscal year 1988, states expect to serve approximately 1.6 million people through these programs. This total is higher than the combined number of welfare recipients served through work programs operated through AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) and the JTPA (Job Training Partnership Act) Program administered by the Department of Labor.

In this issue of *Food and Nutrition*, we'll look at some of the ways state and local food stamp managers have tailored their employment and training activities to recipients' needs. We'll also look at some private efforts to help people join or re-enter the workforce, and how some caring teachers, health professionals, and business leaders are helping young men and women build independent lives.



Food Stamps... Bringing Work Into Focus

In an earlier interview in this magazine, Anna Kondratas, administrator of the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), assessed USDA's food assistance policies in these words: "There is no doubt that our programs provide a nutritional safety net for low-income people, and spending on that net has expanded substantially since 1980."

But food programs, she noted, must be viewed in the context of the overall welfare system. And the growing consensus among both the general public and officials at every level of government is that such programs should encourage self-sufficiency and provide a ladder out of poverty. Welfare should help people help themselves.

Changes strengthen work requirements

The Food Stamp Program has had some form of work requirement since 1971, when able-bodied recipients between the ages of 18 and 60 were first required to register for work. Then, as now, mothers of young children were among those exempt from the requirement, as well as persons enrolled in other work and training programs.

Despite token compliance, registering alone did not put many people to work. To strengthen the work incentive, states were subsequently given

the option of requiring nonexempt food stamp recipients to search for jobs.

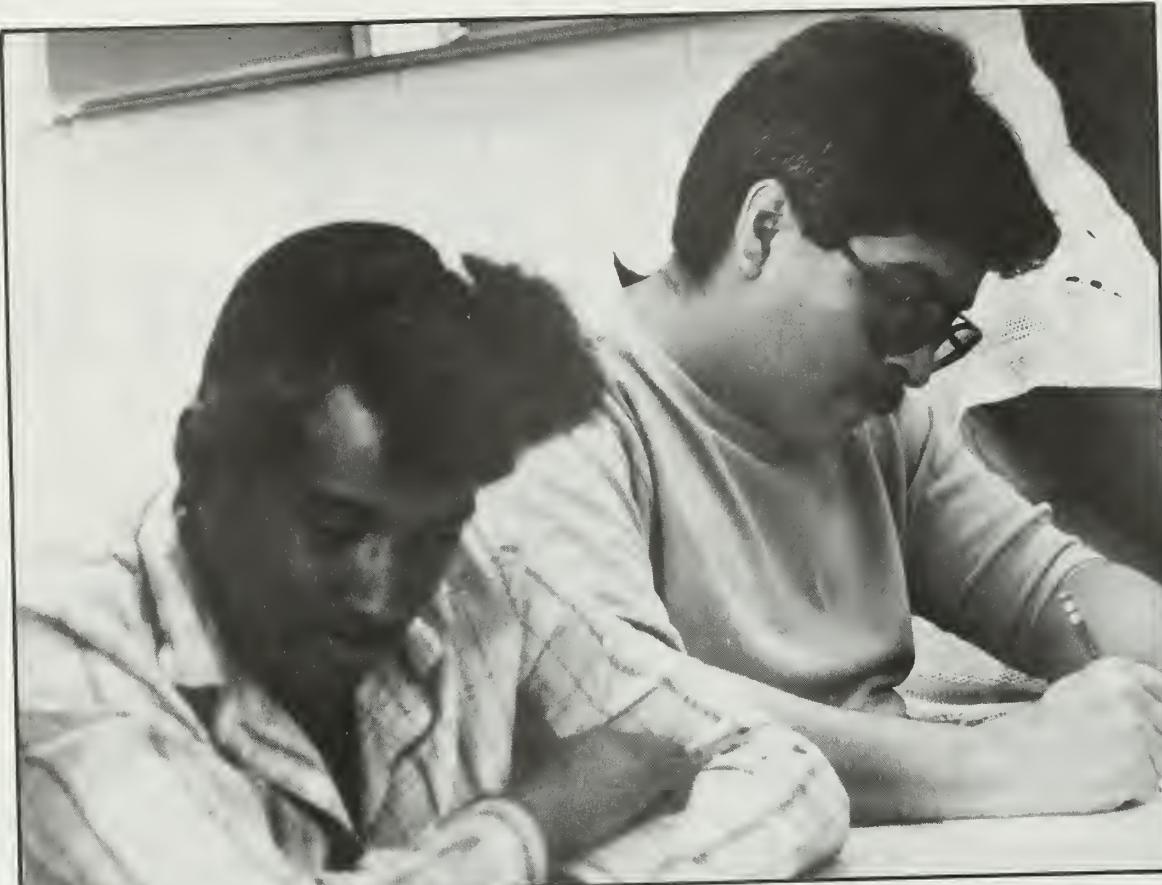
In 1981, the law was again amended to authorize any political subdivision in any state to operate a workfare program. As of 1986, 40 states were requiring job search, and 17 sites with program jurisdictions

were operating food stamp workfare programs.

In April 1987, states began implementing provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985, which calls for expanded efforts to help food stamp participants prepare for and obtain productive employment. The new rules require that every state have an employment and training program.



Every state has some type of program to help food stamp participants prepare for and find work. Here, Rebecca Varella of Delaware meets with case managers and supervisors. (See story on page 15.)



Federal grants and matching money have enabled states to plan and launch meaningful activities to help food stamp recipients move into regular employment. The law allows states broad discretion in shaping programs according to their available resources and the specific needs of their registrant pool.

Nationally, this "pool" represents about 10 percent of all food stamp recipients. As a group, it is distinct from those who participate in the work programs required under Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).

Food stamp work registrants are predominantly young and male, with a high school education. They tend to have a work history and to receive food stamp assistance for relatively short periods. The new employment and training programs can be tailored to this group's special characteristics.

States are expected to provide basic, inexpensive services to as many eligible people as possible. Such services may be successful in moving the more employable recipients toward independence, and identify, in a way that a mere office visit cannot, those who need the extra help of more costly intervention.

Variety of services provided by states

Currently, all states have approved plans in place, but specific components vary.

The largest group of recipients are enrolled in "job search." This component requires individuals to independently contact employers in search of employment and may include job counseling and referrals.

Almost all states have included a job search component in their 1988 plans. These components will serve an estimated 920,000 participants.

As federal managers explain, this basic level of individual job search is already a significant notch above mere work registration. Regional food stamp staff who are reviewing the implementation of state employment and training programs have reported that sites visited had supportive, courteous, and enthusiastic staff. Some job counselors, they say, go beyond referrals to drum up possible positions.

Ron Pelissier, one of the reviewing staff in FNS' Mid-Atlantic Regional Office, says the focus is no longer on conforming to a rule—having food stamp recipients register for work—but on actually putting them to work. In

San Diego has had job clubs for food stamp participants for the past 5 years. Courses include 4 days of classroom work and 4 days of soliciting job interviews by phone. (See story on page 9.)

many cases, that means finding ways to deal with special circumstances—such as poor work skills or a lack of child care—that have made it difficult for recipients to take jobs.

He also notes that states that already had job search in effect before the employment and training requirements have gotten off to a faster start. Their task, he says, is to refine and refocus their programs.

Many states have job search training

To help participants find employment, 41 states have special training on job search. Through workshops, job clubs, and other activities, participants learn successful job hunting techniques. In 1988, nearly 285,000 people will be involved in this training.

Don Cundiff, chief of Food Stamp Program operations in the Southwest Regional Office, speaks favorably of this component.

"A primary value of this type of training is the structure it provides," he says. "Whether clients have been unemployed for 3 weeks, 3 months, or 3 years, the training definitely adds structure to their lives and their job search."

"This seems to be particularly true of the experienced workers who may have forgotten some of the skills required in seeking work." He adds that younger recipients, who may lack both work experience and skills, sometimes require more intensive intervention.

For recipients who need additional services, many states combine job search with such other options as work experience, adult education, and vocational training. In 1988, states anticipate placing 110,000 people in workfare or work experience programs; enrolling 81,000 people in vocational or technical training; and providing remedial education to 73,000 people.

In every state, there are exemplary programs, and several of them are described in individual articles in this issue.

Coordinating with other agencies

A special problem of our huge welfare system has been its fragmentary nature—different federal departments support independent programs, many of which overlap or actually compete in services offered.

States that choose to offer a broad array of employment and training services to food stamp work registrants have complete flexibility to merge their programs or make them compatible with existing programs in the same project area.

Below are examples of cooperative arrangements with employment and education systems and other welfare programs that multiply the impact of limited funds.

- Major components of the employment system are the Department of Labor's Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) and State Employment Services. By working with the private industry councils established by JTPA, states may seek to increase the industry and business openings available to food stamp work registrants.

In Wood County, Ohio, the JTPA program offsets the cost of operating

job clubs by making job search activities available to other work programs. State Employment Services frequently administer cost-free tests of literacy, aptitudes, and interests, as well as offering counseling, job development, and recruitment services.

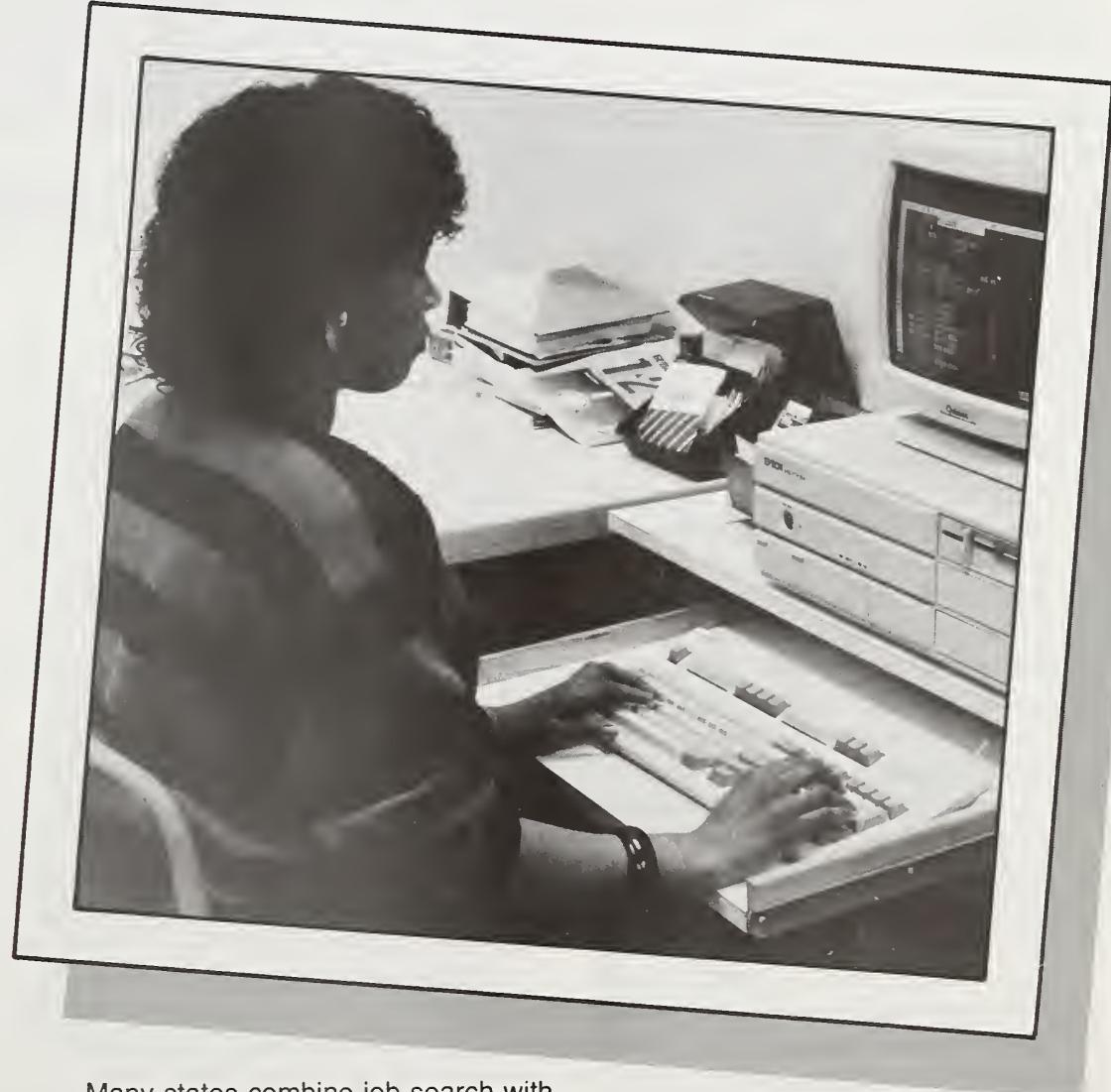
- Operators of food stamp employment and training programs may be able to tap into the child care, transportation, or other support services established for participants in other welfare-related work programs, such as Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). Some food stamp recipients may qualify for federal assistance targeted to special populations, such as refugees and Native Americans.
- There are also many opportunities to cooperate with existing vocational and adult basic education. School boards and other community-based organizations offer a wide variety of basic and remedial classes. Mental

health agencies, hospitals, and drug abuse centers frequently offer classes on wellness and self-esteem.

In Tennessee, JTPA-funded community college vocational education classes faced cancellation because too few students were enrolled. By placing food stamp employment and training participants in the unfilled slots, everyone benefited.

Hawaii uses several existing community resources to provide employment and training services at no cost to the Food Stamp Program. These services include academic testing and instruction, career assessment and counseling, job search and referrals, vocational training, and community service employment.

These are only a few examples of the creative networking typical of the most successful employment and training programs. Combining existing resources makes the most economical use of staff, equipment, and facilities.



Many states combine job search with other activities, such as vocational or technical training, workfare or work experience programs, or adult education.

The 1985 Food Security Act mandated that USDA establish performance standards to ensure that states operate meaningful employment and training programs. A basic goal is to include as many work registrants as possible.

Under the standards, states must place 35 percent of all food stamp recipients who are not exempt from work requirements into an employment and training program by the first quarter of fiscal year 1989.

The Food and Nutrition Service has already begun a major evaluation of both the administration and the results of the new employment and training programs. An independent contractor is collecting data at 56 program sites that have agreed to participate in the evaluation.

The study report, which will be submitted to Congress in January 1989, will describe how the different programs work, whether states are meeting their commitments, and how cost-effective the various approaches are.

With a clear picture of the impact of various activities on employment, earnings, and food stamp participation, states can identify and share successful techniques.

The study is expected to shed light on the comparative results of basic and more elaborate programs, and provide follow-up data on participants, among other things.

Most food stamp officials believe the employment and training programs represent a valuable step toward reducing welfare dependency.

"Outside factors, such as the availability of jobs, will set some limits on the dollar savings and the drop in caseloads," says Don Cundiff. "But if we are willing to stay the course, I am confident that job search and training money will be well spent."

This expectation is supported by demonstration projects that have shown welfare and work-related projects to be cost effective. However, as Anna Kondratas points out, the value in helping people help themselves cannot be wholly quantified.

"Any system that strengthens the reciprocal obligations and mutual respect between welfare recipients and the rest of society benefits us all," she says.

article by Wini Scheffler

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“E & T” Up Close

A Look At Food Stamp Employment ^{and} Training Projects In Several Areas //

Oklahoma

Flexibility Is Key To Matching Jobs, People, And Resources

"I never dreamed I'd find a job in a place like this," says June Hayward, explaining how she came to be a secretary for the food stamp employment and training (E & T) counselor for Canadian County, Oklahoma. Hayward is one of nearly 11,000 food stamp participants who have found employment through Oklahoma's E & T program since its inception in 1985.

Her reentry into the job market seemed to be one frustrating experience after another. She was, after all, starting out with several strikes against her—her age (mid-50's), limited work experience, and limited marketable skills.

"I worked in a hospital before my daughter was born," Hayward says, "but they told me they weren't hiring nurses' aides right now."

Hayward had quit work after the birth of her child and devoted herself to the role of fulltime mother and

homemaker for nearly 16 years. Her husband preferred that she be at home and he had made a good living, until his health failed.

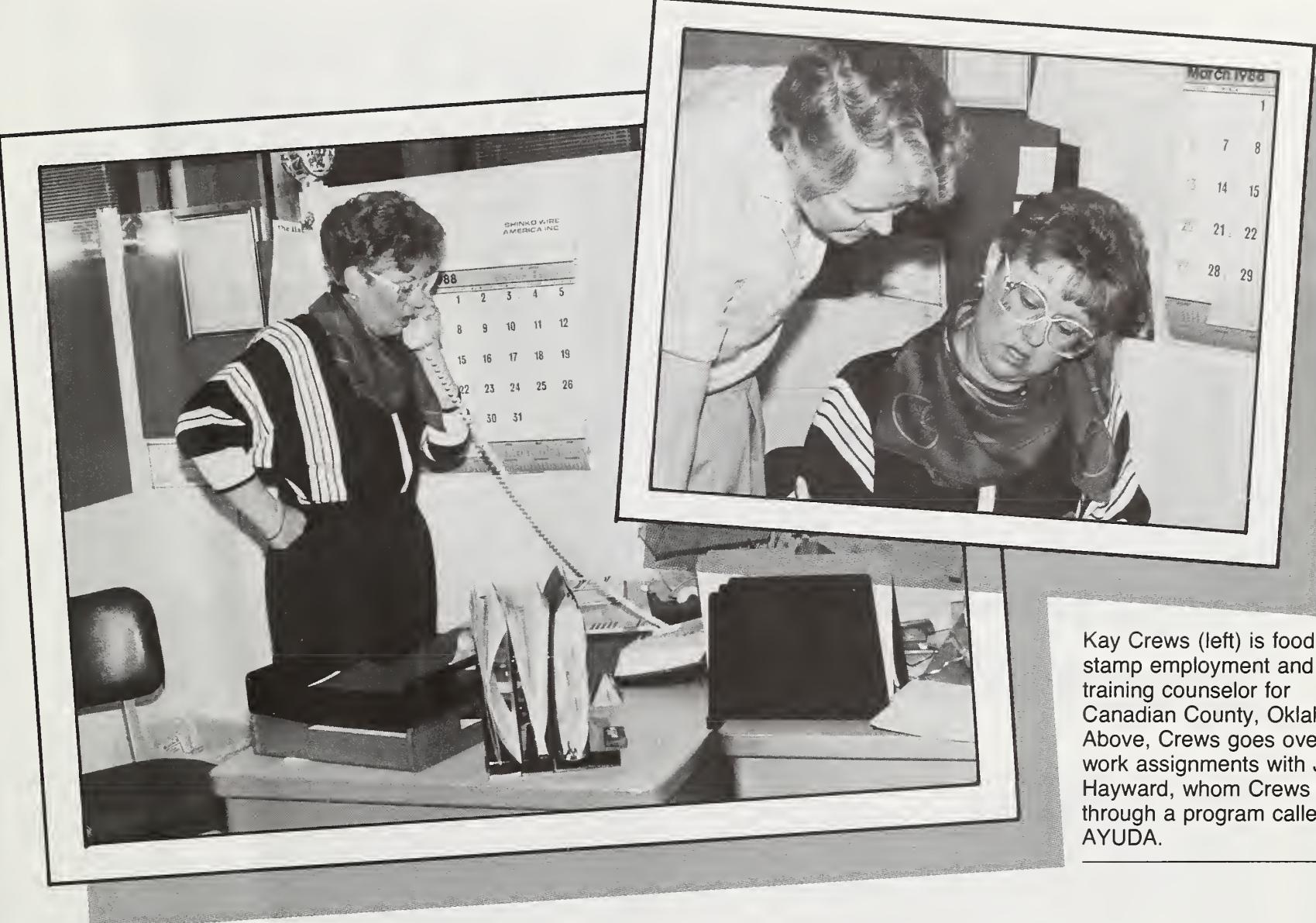
As her husband's ability to work became less and less, Hayward did her best to keep the family afloat. She tried to work as a housekeeper for a local motel, but the work proved more of a physical challenge than she could handle. "We were lifting and turning mattresses, with two workers to a room," she says. "After about 5 hours, I nearly passed out."

She also worked several temporary assignments as a nontechnical medical worker, caring for elderly adults, but wasn't able to get enough work to make ends meet. Finally, after exhausting their savings, the Haywards applied for food stamps.

A first step in getting help

Things seemed to fall into place once Hayward made contact with E & T counselor Kay Crews. Crews had recently learned of a program whose goal is to provide training and work experience for older Americans.

The program—called AYUDA—will pay salary costs for up to 20 hours per week when participants are placed in training positions with nonprofit or



Kay Crews (left) is food stamp employment and training counselor for Canadian County, Oklahoma. Above, Crews goes over work assignments with June Hayward, whom Crews hired through a program called AYUDA.

governmental organizations. AYUDA is funded through the Salvation Army, and its ultimate goal is to prepare participants for entry into private sector jobs. Participants must be low-income and at least 55 years of age.

Crews needed someone to handle clerical duties for her, and Hayward seemed like a good candidate. Hayward was thrilled that, in this instance, her age was an asset rather than a barrier as it had been when applying for most other jobs.

Crews is teaching Hayward the various functions of the job—filing, maintaining the appointment log, and keeping thorough records. While she is in training, Hayward supplements her income by running a paper route for the local newspaper.

"She needs a full-time income," Crews says, "and I keep this in mind as I search the community for job openings—both for Hayward, when

she is ready, and for my other E & T clients."

Although the people Crews helps face many of the same problems in being unemployed or underemployed, their circumstances differ. Recognizing that the same approach will not work in all cases, the state gives Crews and her counterparts in other counties considerable flexibility in working with food stamp participants.

"We've made a real strong commitment to allowing local counselors the flexibility to deal with clients on an individual basis," says Paul McTighe, an administrative officer with the Department of Human Services' headquarters in Oklahoma City.

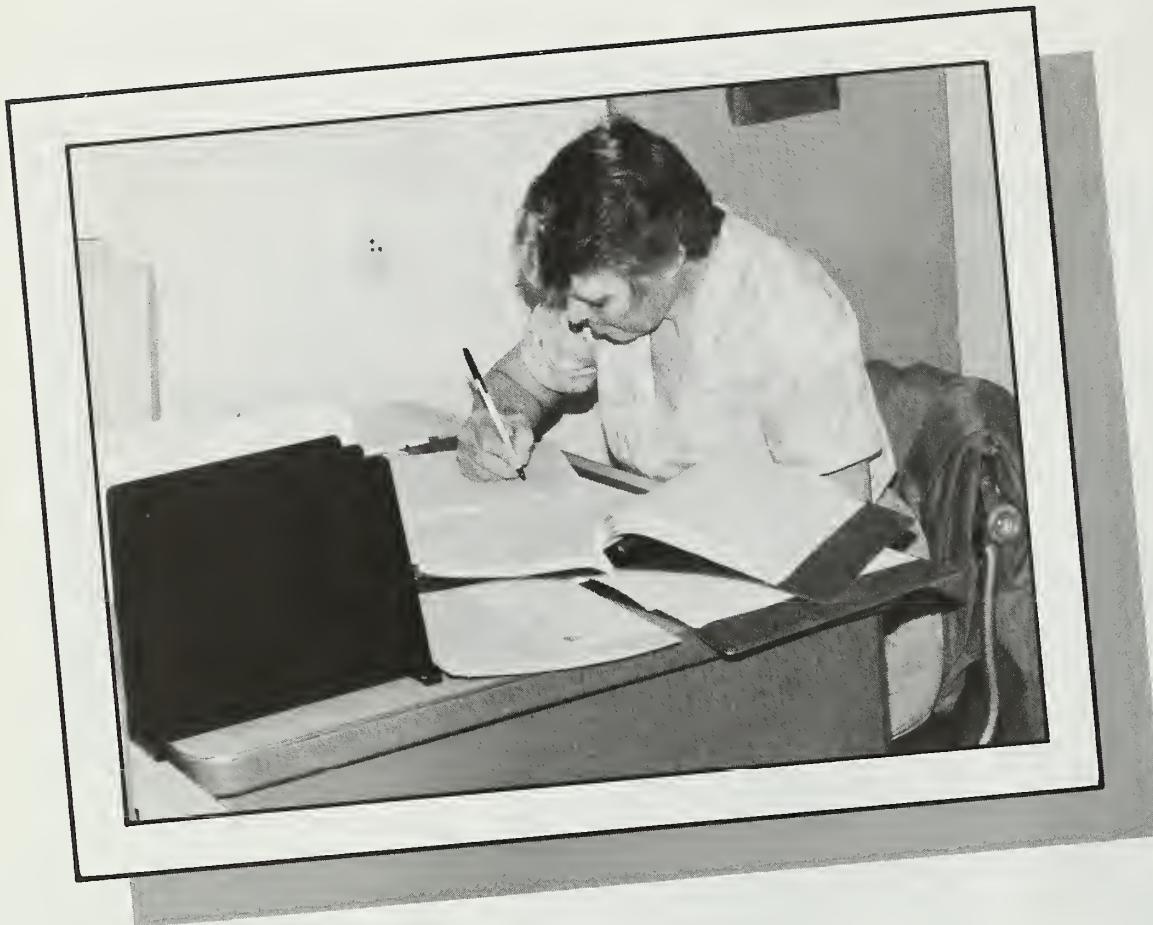
"Our overall goal is to place clients into employment through the most cost-effective means available," he says. The state sets the parameters within which to operate, but counselors are not required to use a state-specified formula.

People's needs and circumstances assessed

Crews' initial contact with each participant includes an assessment of their strengths and weaknesses. What jobs have they held? What kinds of work are they interested in? Is transportation a problem? Will finding affordable child care be a prerequisite to working a full-time job? Are there physical limitations to be considered or emotional problems to work through before the participant can be expected to be a viable job candidate?

Matching the resources needed to address these peripheral issues is as important as matching potential job openings with the appropriate people, Crews says.

Crews' 13 years of experience with Oklahoma's Department of Human Services gives her a broad knowledge of resources available through the government, but she also keeps up to date on resources available through



other avenues within the community.

"A large percentage of our clients lack a high school education," Crews says, so many of their referrals are to GED (Graduate Equivalency Degree) programs.

Crews also makes other kinds of referrals. For example, when one client kept losing his job because of his temper, she referred him for therapy. "He understood he had a problem," she says. "He just hadn't done anything to alleviate it."

Then there are some people who need nothing more than to be told they have something to offer. "They are so down on themselves, they think, 'Why would anybody hire me?'" Crews uses a lot of positive reinforcement to convince them that qualities they may consider insignificant can be tremendous assets. She teaches them to sell themselves to employers.

Contacting employers is also important

On Friday of each week, Crews applies her sales ability in another direction. She tries to sell area employers on the E & T program—to convince them to fill any vacancies they have with one of her E & T

June Hayward is one of nearly 11,000 food stamp participants who have found work through Oklahoma's E & T program since it began 3 years ago.

participants.

"Educating the employers is really very important to the success of this program," Crews says. "Sometimes the employers' attitude is that they're not interested in hiring anybody who is on welfare because they think these people don't want to work."

One employer voiced this opinion when Crews visited him, then called her the next week when his secretary suddenly quit. "I sent him a secretary the next day, and he was absolutely thrilled," Crews says. He has been a firm supporter ever since.

The results of her contacts with area employers help fill the job banks that all E & T counselors are required to maintain for their participants. "You essentially have to get out there and look for a job," Crews says. "The only difference is that you're looking for it for someone else."

While officially she devotes 1 day a week to maintaining the job bank, she

admits that in reality she is on a job search no matter where she is or what she is doing.

One Saturday, while Crews was having a trailer hitch installed on her car, she provoked a rather curious look from the mechanic when she asked about a job.

"Once I told him who I was, he said, 'Well, as a matter of fact, I need a welder real bad!' And I said, 'I'll send you someone Monday.'" The man she had in mind had just lost his job as an oil field welder.

Matching resources and opportunities

All matches between employers and participants are not this easy, but Crews seems to have a knack for coming up with the right combination of employment opportunities and required resources. In one recent case, the right job and the needed resource came neatly packaged in one local employer, a couple, named Don and Linda Kelley.

The Kelleys, who own a restaurant, motel, and convenience store, needed to fill a janitorial position they had open in their restaurant. They employ close to 100 people for their three operations and provide free transportation to and from work for any of their employees who want it.

Crews told E & T participant, Phillip Morlan, about the job. Morlan had worked as a janitor before, but he had been unemployed for nearly 3 months before he came in contact with Crews. His lack of transportation had been a severely limiting factor in accepting jobs.

Morlan walked to the restaurant for an interview that very afternoon and started work the next day. "I got pretty lucky," Morlan said, as his face lit up with a big smile. "It worked pretty quick for me. I just hope it works that well for everybody else."

For more information, contact:
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Telephone: (405) 521-4414

article and photos by
C. Kay Blakley

San Diego

Job Club Gives Valuable Support And Direction

For 5 years, San Diego County, California, has been putting food stamp recipients through a crash course in the nitty gritty of landing a job. It's called job club.

The club is specific, hard hitting, and effective. At the end of 8 days, the graduates come out recharged,

confident, and, in many cases, employed. Since the job club began in 1983, 52 percent of its graduates have found jobs within 3 months of completing the course.

Job club curriculum is standardized among five job clubs and concentrates on interviewing skills. The course includes 4 days of classroom training immediately followed by 4 days of actually soliciting job interviews over the telephone under the supervision of job club instructors. The format is chiefly group instruction with individualized counseling squeezed in as needed and as possible.

Developing interviewing skills is stressed

According to its graduates, much of the success of the job club is due to the enthusiasm and commitment of the instructors. Randy Kummer is an example.

"Before I can teach them, I have to reach them," Kummer says. "You've got to come across with enthusiasm and convince them that you're not just another cog in the system, but there to help them. You've got to mean it, too, because they can tell."

Each class is different, says Kummer, and classes may need different approaches. But there are basic similarities. For example, interviewing techniques are always stressed.

"Everything is geared to improving the way you present yourself in an interview," says Kummer. "We teach that if you go in and you really want to work and you show your enthusiasm, that attitude will be as important to the boss as your ability to do the job."



Job club participants benefit from the enthusiasm of instructors like Randy Kummer (right). "You've got to show you're there to help them," he says.

Like similar job clubs in other counties, training includes confidence-building exercises. "We analyze each person's marketable skills, work on goal setting, and talk about the hidden job market of the positions you don't see advertised," says Kummer.

"We also do a practice interview on tape at the beginning of the class and another one after the training and compare the two. In between, participants interview and critique each other. We ask them whether they'd hire the person they just interviewed, and why.

"To sound positive, you have to feel positive so we work on attitude a lot. I get people in the club who are very negative about being here, and I've got to turn them around.

"I can teach them interviewing skills, but if they don't change their attitude it's not going to work. Sometimes I use the class to apply some peer group pressure. Some people you have to nurture along, and some you really have to challenge. When I need to, I do a little one-on-one counseling."

Instructors see attitudes change

Kummer can see attitudes change as people become more involved. "Most people realize this is a real opportunity and really go after it. When they start getting positive and enthusiastic, they start developing good interviewing skills because they start paying attention."

Kummer and other instructors give participants a chance to look at some of the problems that may be making getting a job difficult for them.

"A common problem is the 'language barrier' between the establishment business managers and the job-seekers living in the barrios," Kummer says. "They speak a different language."

"These people are skilled, intelligent, and very articulate with each other, but when you put them in an interview situation, they're literally trying to switch over to speaking the managers' language."

"To a prospective employer, they may sound uneducated or ignorant. They are not. We try to get them to hear themselves as an employer would, and then help them practice



"Job club got my motivation back up," says Yvonne (above). "It rebuilt my spirit and focused my energy."

better ways to sell themselves."

After 4 days of job club, participants spend 4 days on the phone calling potential employers to arrange job interviews.

"At first, they're often kind of negative," says Kummer. "They think this isn't going to work. But when they start making calls and getting little bites and interviews, you should see their eyes light up. All of a sudden, they're really charging ahead."

Participants have different skills

One of the challenges of running a successful job club is being able to work with participants who have different skills and different levels of experience in the working world. According to Kummer, most are not the "hard core" unemployed, but people who have turned to programs like food stamps for help during a period of unemployment.

"The people who come to job club are employable," says Kummer. "They have skills but need some help landing their next job. That's why we

stress confidence building and interviewing skills."

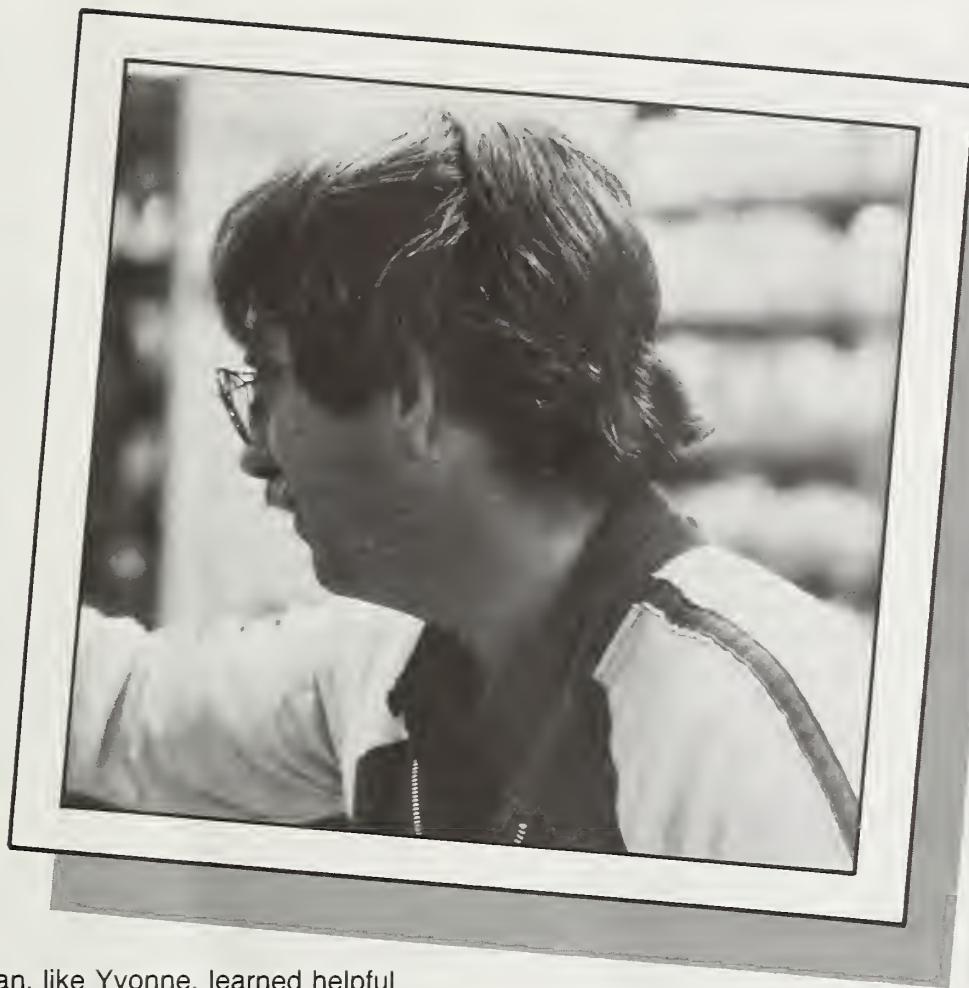
People who appear able to find jobs themselves are assigned to individual job search, rather than job club, and people who need basic work experience are assigned to workfare.

"I think basically job club shortens the time people need to be on public aid," says Kummer. "These people want to find work and we try to accelerate the process. When we do, I think we're doing them a real service."

Yvonne and Homayun are two job club graduates who found jobs with some help from Randy Kummer and his associates.

Yvonne is young, ambitious, and had worked steadily for 8 years. She was shocked when she was laid off last fall and surprised at how quickly she went into a tailspin when her initial job-hunting wasn't successful.

She lost her confidence and her motivation and began to feel her world contracting to the four walls of her home. She applied for food stamps to help keep food on the table while she



This man, like Yvonne, learned helpful interviewing skills in Randy Kummer's job club class.

returned to school and was assigned to job club.

Job club helped in several ways

"I'm the kind of person who needs a push now and then," she says. "That's what job club did for me. I've always worked, and I'd worked for that company for 2-1/2 years. I still can't believe I was laid off."

"At first, I laughed it off and took a vacation—my first one. Then I went on some job interviews and got some 'no's.' Pretty soon I started finding excuses to not job hunt, like I didn't have the right dress to wear, or it was too late in the day to start. I began sleeping in."

"My confidence went down and it got to where I just couldn't get up and go look for a job. The world was passing me by."

"Job club got my motivation back up. It rebuilt my spirit and focused my energy. Our instructor had a genuine interest in us as people, and it showed. He really wanted us to get jobs, and that made us want to get

jobs. He believed in us so much, it made us believe in ourselves again.

"When we started to make phone calls for interviews, I didn't think it would work. The first phone call I made, I was surprised when they gave me an appointment for the next day. They hired me the next week."

A few months after Yvonne got her first job, she heard about a better job. With job club help, she made a resume and won her present job doing word processing and data entry for an architectural firm. Still drawing on job club advice, Yvonne is looking for still other opportunities.

"I'm back to my old self again, and life is going a lot better for me. I'm happier when I'm working."

Emotional support makes a difference

Homayun, like Yvonne, is a recent job club graduate who has achieved his goal of landing a good job. When he lost his job last August, he became demoralized very quickly. He feels job club gave him important emotional support when he needed it.

"After you've been looking for work for a while," he says, "you start expecting people to turn you down. Job club gave me back my self-esteem, my confidence, and my ability to work."

"I had some job skills but the club provided a sort of moral support, group therapy. You talk about problems you've had, and they offer suggestions and encouragement. It's basic networking, being around others in the same situation and helping each other."

"After job club, I took the initiative to take the county general placement test, and I got some interviews. The first few were pretty shaky, so I reached back and drew on my job club experience. I kept in contact with my job club instructor and followed his advice."

"For example, I began researching my potential employers. I found out something about the department, the job, the mission, how the department functions. I pictured myself in the position. I was prepared when I interviewed for this job, and I got it."

"I'm going back to college this summer to begin work on a 4-year degree in accounting, which I'll use to advance in the department. This is my way of giving back to the county and the community for what they have given me."

Randy Kummer and other job club instructors get a lot of satisfaction in seeing people like Homayun get their lives back on track.

"I like seeing those smiles"

"This is the best job I've had," Kummer says. "I want to do something to help people and I can do that here. I turn people around. I see people change. Some pat me on the back after class. Some come back after they find work and hug me. I like seeing those smiles."

For more information on San Diego's job club, contact:
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article and photos
by Tino Serrano

Las Vegas

Word Is Getting Out That The "A-Team" Gets Results

They've been dubbed the "A-Team" and, like their television namesakes, they are committed to doing whatever it takes to help people with problems.

Working out of the Las Vegas welfare office, their mission is to help food stamp and welfare recipients get jobs. Officially known as the Employment and Training Service Unit, the "team" consists of five employment

specialists, one employment counselor, and a unit and a field supervisor.

Although their techniques are more subtle than the brawn of Mr. "T" and more direct than the intricate plotting of the Colonel, like the t.v. "A-Team" they take a personal interest in the people they help.

Take, for example, the case of June Craig, a young single parent receiving food stamps and AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children), and working for minimum wage at a deli.

She had 3 years of college and had recently completed a business school

course on computers. For nearly a year, June had unsuccessfully searched for a job where she could use her training. When she finally turned to the E & T service unit, she was discouraged. "It seemed like no one would give me a chance," she says.

"She was motivated and had all the qualifications," says employment specialist Linda Sims. "All she needed was some job seeking guidance and a lot of moral support."

Counseling makes possibilities clearer

Sims counseled June on interviewing techniques, helped her prepare a resume, and recommended employers most likely to need her skills. Then she began arranging job interviews. As often happens in the tightly knit



Las Vegas office, Sims heard about a job opening in an appliance store from a co-worker in another department.

"It seemed ideal for June," Sims says. "It was doing some data entry, accounts receivable, and clerical work. But she was going to have to work to land the job." After four tough interviews, and bolstered by Sims' steady encouragement, June got the job.

But not all of the E & T service unit's participants are as job ready or motivated as June.

Cheryl Cornwell is the lone employment counselor in the E & T service unit. She sets up and teaches a weekly 2-day job search workshop for food stamp participants who are not job ready, and two followup workshops for those still having trouble finding jobs.

She also works with food stamp recipients who have prison records, emotional problems, or have had drug, alcohol, or other problems that make finding and keeping a job difficult.

"Most of my clients have been employed," Cornwell says. "They just haven't been employed for very long. In my 7 years in welfare work, I've found that most people can get a job, but they can't keep it. Stressing job-keeping skills is a big part of my workshops."

Cornwell prefers to be known as a teacher rather than a counselor. Although she had taken courses in counseling before joining the E & T team, she had never worked as a counselor.

"They said the job was more an education job than a counseling job and that's why I took it. I like to teach. These are hard students," she adds. "Sometimes it's like teaching a special education class. But they need someone to care whether they are doing anything or not."

When Cornwell started teaching the job search workshops, she encountered some resistance. She recalls one woman who stood up during a

workshop and in a very loud voice said, "I don't know what this has to do with food stamps." At the end of the session, she stood up again and said, "You know, I didn't know why I had to be here, but I'm glad I came."

Cornwell feels that resistance to attending even the mandatory workshops is fading. "Word is getting out that we can help them make it on their own," she says.

Unit combined several programs

The Las Vegas service unit was formed in February 1987. "What we did," says Vince Fallon, Las Vegas district office manager, "was to consolidate all of the state's job search and training resources into one unit to better serve the clients and bring all of our resources to bear on the problem of putting people to work."

According to Fallon, five programs—Community Work Experience, WIN, Title 20 Employment, Refugee Employment, and the Food Stamp

Employment and Training Program—went into the Employment and Training Services Unit.

The "A-Team" staff realize that simply requiring people to actively seek employment is not going to put everyone to work. For some, additional education or training is needed. Others need work experience.

Lana Lanahan is one E & T participant who needed help in sharpening her work skills and lining up a job where she could use them. Lanahan had worked in an office before her baby was born. When divorce sharply reduced her family income, she turned to food stamps and AFDC.

Occasionally, she found work in fast food restaurants at minimum wage. It had been 5 years since she worked in an office, and although she looked long and hard, she had no recent job experience to recommend her to would-be employers.

Through a friend, she heard about the people at the E & T service unit and went to them with her problem. Within a few days, Lana was enrolled in a federally funded program called



June Craig (opposite page) and Lana Lanahan (right) are two of the many people who have been helped to find jobs through the work of Las Vegas' "A-Team," formed in 1987.

the Community Work Experience Program. She was put to work at a welfare office near her home to hone her office skills.

Fortunately, a few days before her 3-month work experience program ended, an administrative assistant job opened up and she was hired full time. Now, part of her job is to staff the information desk where she encourages food stamp applicants with her personal success story.

Staff actively seek opportunities

Counseling, encouraging, and preparing people for jobs is only part of what the E & T service unit does. Actively seeking and recruiting potential employers and gaining community and institutional support are also high priorities.

"We deal with two types of clients," says Liliam Hickey, field supervisor of the E & T service unit. "Those who need training or education, and those who are ready to work right now."

Hickey is responsible for locating and negotiating with potential public and private sector employers and those who can help train or educate food stamp and welfare recipients. A welfare worker for the past 17 years, Hickey typifies the enthusiasm for the work of the E & T service unit. "It's the most rewarding job I've ever had," she says.

Working with business and civic leaders, Liliam and other "A-Team" staff have convinced a number of local businesses that they can supply good, dependable workers.

Through their work in the community, more than 40 different kinds of contractors have been signed up as employers and providers of training and job experience opportunities.

These include government agencies, small and large businesses, institutions, and civic groups and organizations. In addition, they have worked to eliminate some of the barriers to employment often faced by low-income job seekers.

For example, when the Las Vegas Employment and Training Office was first established, one of Hickey's first contacts was with Las Vegas' large Culinary Union.

She managed not only to convince

union officials that the E & T service unit could supply the permanent and part-time workers they needed, but also negotiated a waiver of the initial union fee which had often prevented low-income clients from being placed in jobs by the union in the past.

Since that initial success with the Culinary Union, and based on establishing a good track record of dependable workers, Hickey has negotiated similar agreements with the Bartenders and Teamsters Unions.

Sometimes people need added help

"Often it is a small thing that will keep a food stamp or welfare recipient from gainful employment," Hickey says. "Things like a uniform, tools, and even transportation can be difficult for low-income people to come up with."

Hickey has successfully talked transportation officials into giving discounted bus passes for participants needing transportation to seek employment or to get a job.

All of Las Vegas' thrift shops have agreed to donate uniforms necessary for jobs in many hotels and casinos, and even suitable clothing for work or job interviews. Other E & T service unit staff have helped participants with makeup and grooming tips, and others have solicited donations of tools and utensils from local businesses.

"Recently," Hickey says, "a client of ours needed a hospital uniform so she could begin work. I went to a local hospital and talked to some of the nurses. They went through their lockers and now we have a pretty good supply of uniforms for hospital workers."

For those participants not yet ready for the job market, the E & T service unit has made arrangements with the school district's adult education program to provide free technical and educational classes. To insure that the people to be trained are qualified to take the courses, the school district visits the welfare office each month to test the would-be students.

E & T service staff have arranged tuition-free typing classes ranging in length from 6 months to 1 year; a medical terminology class; two nurses aide programs; and several year-long

courses which are enabling a number of people to get their GED's (Graduate Equivalency Degrees).

Hickey feels one of her most successful efforts was a recent training class she arranged in conjunction with the Welfare Department and the Las Vegas Professional Black Women's Alliance.

Periodically, the U.S. Postal Service conducts a test which they use to develop a register from which they hire workers. In cooperation with the Welfare Department and the Professional Black Women's Alliance, the E & T service unit conducted a class to train participants on taking the federal test.

"We trained 49 people," Hickey says. "We hope we can get several of our people on that register. Those are good jobs."

Team recognized for its success

According to Vince Fallon, the "A-Team" has been successful because of the enthusiasm and motivation everyone has had for the program since its inception.

"We had the will and the spirit to do creative and innovative things and we have successfully passed that on to our clients and the community. It is an enthusiasm for the whole concept of employment and training and an enthusiasm in support of our clients."

"We won't give up on them," he adds. "We keep after them to believe in themselves."

Fallon, who came up with the "A-Team" nickname when the unit was established, feels that it is very descriptive of their work and their attitude.

"They accomplish difficult things," he says, "by being creative, innovative, and enthusiastic. They won't take no for an answer. They simply get the job done. That's my A-Team."

For more information, contact: Vince Fallon, District Office Manager State Department of Human Resources, Welfare Division 700 Belrose Street—State Mail Las Vegas, Nevada 89158 Telephone: (702) 486-5031

*article and photos
by Dick Montoya*

Delaware

Project Managers Stress Self-Esteem And Responsibility

It's not hard for Rebecca Varella to feel compassion for the food stamp and welfare recipients she works with at Delaware's Department of Health and Social Services. The successful 30-year-old state manager was raised on welfare.

"When you hit an obstacle, it's so easy to say, that's it, I'm not going through this," says the soft-spoken Varella. "I was fortunate. I had a lot of people in my life who talked to me about building my strength."

A graduate of the University of Rhode Island, Varella heads the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services' program called "The First Step." The program is helping food stamp and welfare recipients decrease their dependence on assistance programs by building their skills to pursue meaningful employment.

Varella and her staff of four case managers interview the food stamp and welfare recipients who are required to enroll in the employment and training program mandated nationwide by P.L. 99-198. Together they design individualized training plans that are based on each participant's academic level and skills.

Serve participants throughout the state

The participants in the program—which is partially funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)—are learning to write resumes and fill out job

applications at six community-based agencies throughout the state.

Others who have job search skills are attending vocational schools where they are studying such things as nursing, retail management, food service, and data entry.

Varella draws on her own welfare experiences to personalize "The First Step" program, which began in April 1987.

"I relate back to my own experiences and what I needed to keep me moving," says Varella. What she needed, she remembers, was support, encouragement, and a boost to her self-esteem.

Staff emphasize people's strengths

The state staff and community-based agency personnel know that self-esteem plays a key role in making someone employable. To motivate participants and to build their self-esteem, the staff highlight their strengths.



Rebecca Varella (top) is proud of what "The First Step" program is accomplishing. Pictured below is a job search class at West End Neighborhood House in Wilmington, one of six community-based agencies operating the program.

"You can provide all the information you can," says Varella. "You can go over resumes and tell a person how to dress. But if he doesn't feel good about himself, then he'll blow the interview."

In one exercise designed to rebuild confidence, program participants are asked to look closely at the hard times they have survived and to imagine what they could do in good times.

Once participants' self-esteem has improved, case managers talk to them about goals. They help them understand that progress sometimes means taking one step at a time.

"We can't let the participants experience failure," says Varella. "If we do, we'll lose them. When a participant sets up a goal, for example, to increase his English level by two grades and he only moves one grade, we want him to understand there are different levels of improvement. We constantly work with participants until they feel good about themselves."

In addition to building confidence, the Delaware program also stresses taking responsibility for one's own life. Looking back at her experience with public aid, Varella says welfare didn't instill a sense of responsibility. That came, she says, from people who encouraged her to accept responsibility.

Similarly, participants in "The First Step" have to meet certain obligations. For example, they are required to attend classes, and there are penalties if they do not. After several unexcused absences from class, a participant can be ineligible for food stamp benefits for 2 months.

"I'm not a very conservative person," says Varella, "but I do believe that if you're providing the support and services people need to develop their potential, then they have a responsibility to go forth with that."

Initial resistance usually doesn't last

As with anything else, when people are required to do something, they tend initially to be a little resentful. The employment and training participants are no exception to the rule, but the case managers and staff at the community centers do their best to ease the situation.

"Once the clients come in and see the staff, they start to feel good about

being involved in the program," Varella says. "The staff really enjoy working with people. It's not just a job to them. It's in their hearts."

Program participants learn quickly that attending class has its merits because it's leading them to some new opportunities.

"We are the first step, and that's the hardest step to take," Varella says. "We tell the clients that once they take that step, the sky's the limit."

One participant, after taking the classes last spring, said, "I don't like to be told that I have to do something, but after being in the program, I realized my teacher was showing me a direction I wanted to find."

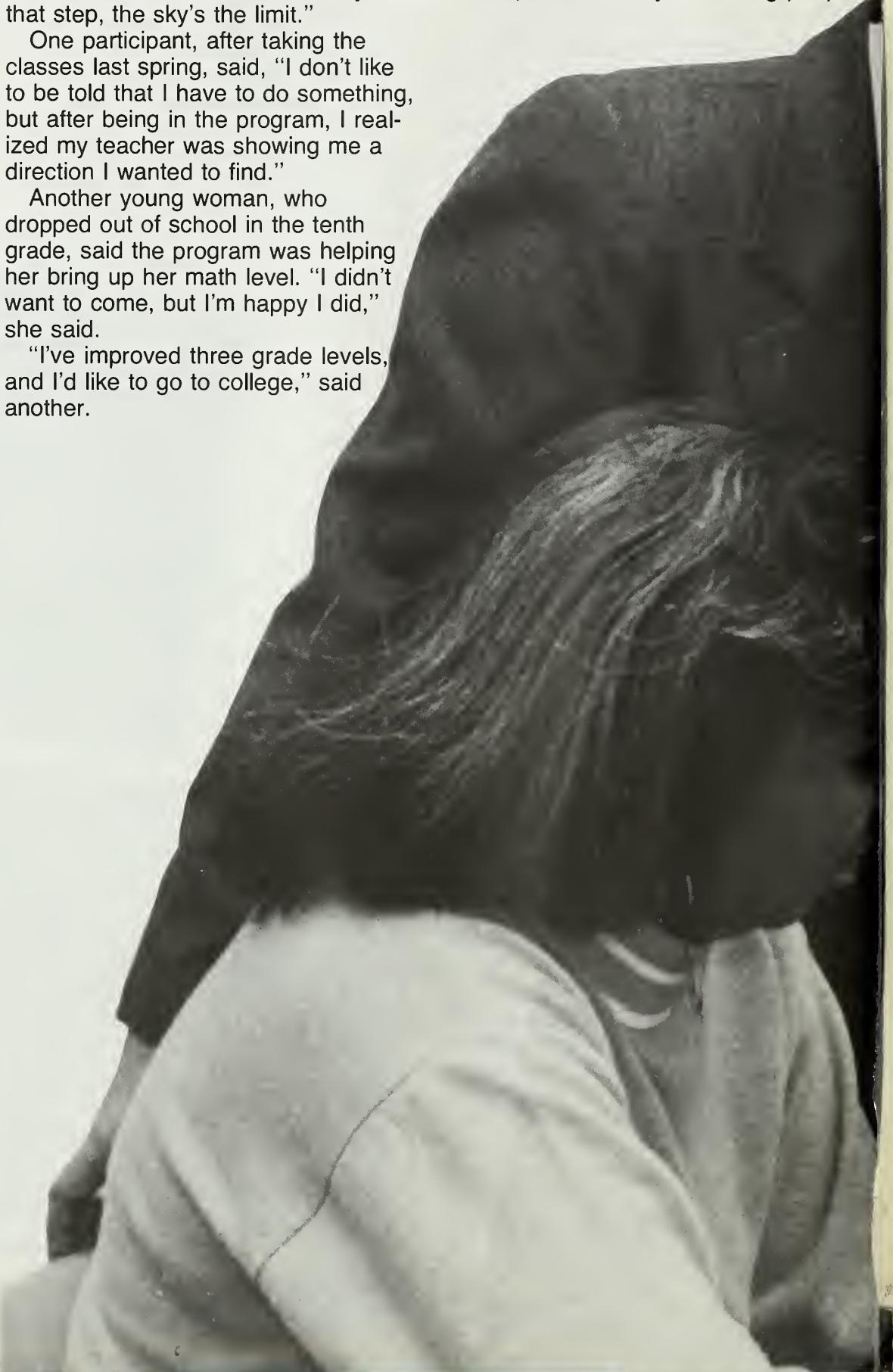
Another young woman, who dropped out of school in the tenth grade, said the program was helping her bring up her math level. "I didn't want to come, but I'm happy I did," she said.

"I've improved three grade levels, and I'd like to go to college," said another.

It takes the program's welfare recipients, on average, 6 months to advance one grade level. "We have some people who can move quickly, and we have others who we'll have to train for a longer period of time," Varella says.

Staff pleased with support and results

Despite the reality of serving people



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Despite the reality of serving people

who are hard to employ, however, the program is accomplishing its goals.

The Department of Health and Social Services projects that by September 1988, 1,800 food stamp and welfare recipients will be enrolled in various component activities. About 600 of these people will be employed.

Varella attributes these successes to the attitudes of the program staff and the support given by Delaware Governor Michael Castle.

"Your program is only going to be as good as the support from the upper level of administration," says Varella. "If you can get the support, then you can do your job. We've been fortunate."

So have the public assistance recipients who Varella says society calls "the rejected few." "They're finally

being accepted," she says enthusiastically. "It's a concern of mine to see that they remain a high priority.

"Our systems pretty much encouraged people not to move forward. We're finally doing what the system was supposed to do."

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article and photos
by Marian Wig



8 Better Buying Skills Help Families Save //

Helping people help themselves is what the Extension Service's Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) is all about.

For more than 20 years, EFNEP has been teaching low-income homemakers how to get the most nutrition for their food dollars. Specially trained paraprofessional nutrition assistants, hired from low-income communities, work one-on-one with homemakers to improve their meal planning, purchasing, and food preparation skills.

Cheyenne, Wyoming, is one area where EFNEP is thriving after experiencing some earlier problems. During the past 4 years, the percent of homemakers enrolling and completing the EFNEP course in Laramie County, where Cheyenne is located, has risen from a low of 9 percent to 48 percent. What the county staff have learned in strengthening their program may be useful for others providing nutrition counseling and food buying help to low-income families.

Made courses shorter and more concentrated

Initially, Wyoming nutrition assistants met with homemakers on a monthly basis and taught 20 different subjects, one each month. They learned that homemakers lost interest anywhere from 6 to 9 months into the training. They remedied the problem by consolidating 20 lessons into 12 and meeting with homemakers weekly.

Along with the new lessons for homemakers, Wyoming Cooperative Extension nutritionists also made

changes in the training they gave their nutrition assistants, who had previously been discouraged by high dropout rates of EFNEP participants and were quitting their jobs.

With better training, clearer goals for assistants, and bi-monthly sessions to discuss mutual problems, teaching techniques, and strategies, the number of assistants quitting dropped dramatically while the number of homemakers completing the lessons spiraled upwards.

The experience of a young airman's wife, who recently completed the revamped Wyoming EFNEP course, is typical of how far the program has come.

The woman had originally sought food assistance for her baby at a local WIC clinic. While there, she had a short interview with a nutrition assistant from the University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service and received help in another area she was struggling with: purchasing enough food on a limited budget to meet her growing family's needs.

Although the nutrition assistant had much more in mind than saving the family money on its grocery bills, she knew that promise was often effective in persuading young mothers to join EFNEP.

The woman did join the program, and the shopping skills she learned in the initial lessons did make a difference. Her grocery bill shrank \$50 a month, even though she was buying more than before.

She also learned how to plan healthier meals. Since the woman's

husband had a cholesterol problem, the nutrition assistant focused on what food the family was eating and how it was prepared. After the discussions, the couple agreed to try new foods and prepare them in ways to eliminate excess fat.

Using several USDA publications on how to buy and serve nutritious low-cost meals, the wife gained more knowledge of food values, caloric intake, nutrients, and menu planning. Her EFNEP session reinforced those ideas. The dietary changes not only helped her husband lose weight but also relieved symptoms of an ulcer that had been bothering him for some time.

Lessons stress careful shopping

The impact of EFNEP usually is felt immediately by homemakers enrolled in the program. During their first lesson, they complete a survey form on their shopping habits. They learn that most shopping practices are common sense, but if shoppers are not well organized, well informed, and attuned to finding bargains, they usually spend far more money than necessary to feed their families.

Homemakers are urged to plan menus before shopping. Sticking to a grocery list is a must. They learn to compare unit prices; look for store and generic brands offering comparable quality; buy day-old or reduced-price bread; keep written records of how much they spend for food; avoid unnecessary trips to the store; check dates for freshness to avoid waste;

State EFNEP coordinator Linda Melcher (standing) holds monthly sessions with nutrition assistants.

buy sale items; shop alone, if possible; and, if storage is not a problem, buy in quantity and repackage items into smaller portions at home.

The program is geared to helping WIC and food stamp participants help themselves long after they have completed the 12-week course. Subsequent sessions deal with distinguishing between wants and needs.

Participants, for instance, may want to purchase potato chips. After looking at the cost of a large bag of chips versus 10 pounds of potatoes and comparing nutrients and number of servings, they realize the processed product is far more expensive and less nutritious.

Another session deals with menu planning and involves studying the major food groups. Lessons are subtly repetitious, reinforcing key ideas that reshape homemakers' food planning, buying, handling, and preparation habits.

Reaching people with valuable help

Although the Wyoming EFNEP effort is limited to the Cowboy State's



four most populous counties, over 2,000 families have been involved in the program during the past 5 years.

Followup studies conducted in three counties among 460 homemakers indicate EFNEP is working. While the nutritional value of meals served has gone up, grocery bills have dropped an average of 10 percent. Among 315 families, EFNEP nutritionists estimate annual grocery savings of nearly \$80,000.

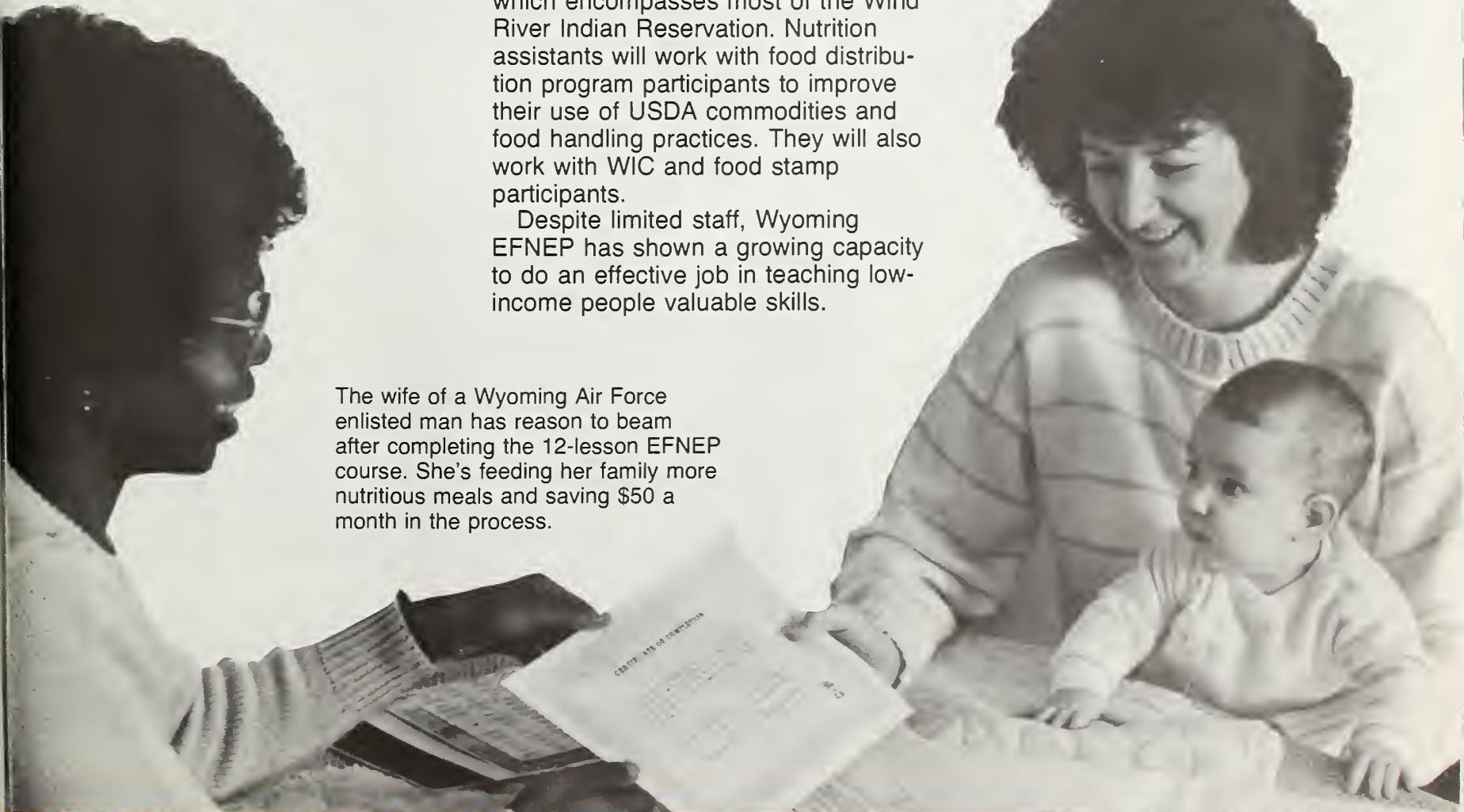
Recently, the Wyoming program expanded to include Fremont County, which encompasses most of the Wind River Indian Reservation. Nutrition assistants will work with food distribution program participants to improve their use of USDA commodities and food handling practices. They will also work with WIC and food stamp participants.

Despite limited staff, Wyoming EFNEP has shown a growing capacity to do an effective job in teaching low-income people valuable skills.

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article and photos
by Craig Forman



The wife of a Wyoming Air Force enlisted man has reason to beam after completing the 12-lesson EFNEP course. She's feeding her family more nutritious meals and saving \$50 a month in the process.

WORC Reaches Out With Jobs And Training

Lou Gifford hadn't worked since 1972. She was on AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) and food stamps. She had worked in a sewing factory and a state hospital for the mentally retarded before she married. Now divorced, she is the mother of a 10-year-old daughter.

"I was desperate," Gifford says. "I couldn't see living on food stamps for the rest of my life. I couldn't see being accountable to others forever."

Gifford saw a poster for the Washington (Pennsylvania) Outreach Retraining Center (WORC) when she was in a welfare office. Seeing that poster, and acting on it, has changed her life.

Gifford called WORC and the center's director, Joyce Blackburn, took her under her wing. Like all students who enroll in WORC's workshops, Gifford wanted to do something with her life but didn't know how to break the vicious cycle she was caught in.

Gifford is now a drafting student at Washington Institute of Technology. She works part-time for civil engineers, looks forward to getting an associate's degree in January 1989 and working full-time in the drafting field.

Finding paths out of welfare

WORC's goal is to help homemakers, like Lou Gifford, join the workforce. An economic development program started in 1984 by Pennsylvania's California University, WORC provides practical help in a variety of ways.

In addition to what are called "Employability Workshops," the center offers financial help with training programs and continuing education. WORC staff act as a support network as students go through training programs and beyond. They also offer occasional workshops in math skills, home-based businesses, and job search.

According to Blackburn, WORC's students are single parents and displaced homemakers. Displaced homemakers, she explains, are people who are widowed, divorced, or have a dis-

abled spouse. Most have no job or training experience. Although geared toward women, a few men who are single parents have taken advantage of the program.

"We try to get people out of the welfare system," says Blackburn. "Welfare agencies refer people to us." Although statistics are incomplete, at least 29 percent of the students in 1987 were on food stamps. Blackburn says that at one point 9 of 11 students then attending a workshop had been on food stamps at some time. Some participants are WIC mothers.



Services provided free to participants

WORC tries to help students in as many ways as possible. There are no fees—workshops and everything attached are free. The center also helps with some of the personal costs associated with the training.

For example, WORC provides for child care while mothers attend workshops. The majority of students have school-age children, but for those with preschoolers, Blackburn finds licensed day care that takes the children for 5 weeks.

WORC also helps with some transportation costs. "Transportation can be a real problem," says Blackburn.

At a WORC workshop (below and opposite page), director Joyce Blackburn (far right) talks with a group of students. Most are single mothers, or women who are widowed, divorced, or have a disabled spouse.

Washington is the county seat, but only has a population of 23,000 people. It is a mining area, basically rural and very depressed. There is public transportation only within the center city.

WORC's funding allows them to pay for public transportation. "We have a couple of women who walk 1-1/2 miles and more to get a bus to come here," says Blackburn.

The women's determination to get to the center is characteristic of the commitment of WORC participants. It's also reflected in the center's success rate, which Blackburn feels is high.

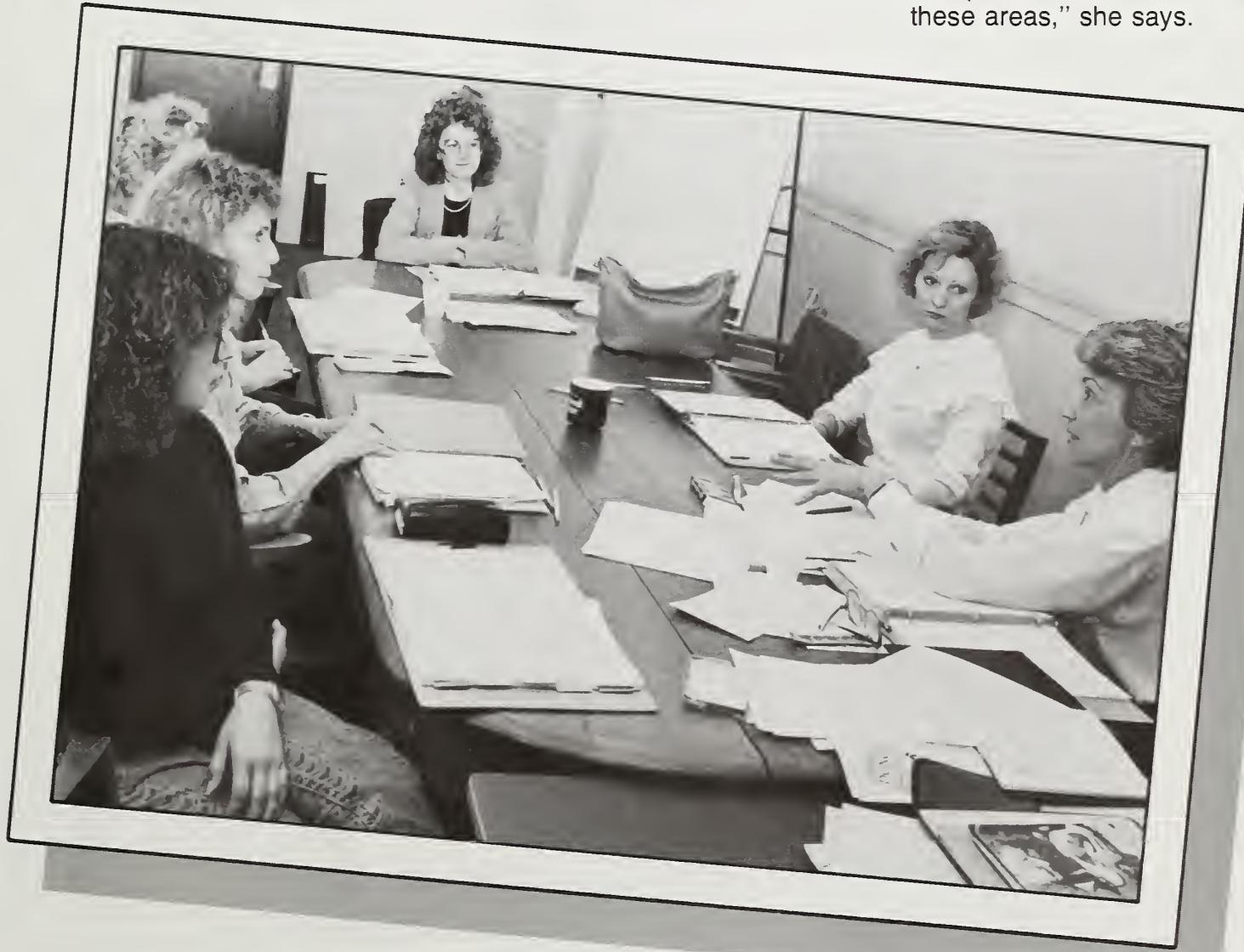
In 1987, WORC had 89 people in its workshops. Some 29 of them are now employed and 25 are in training programs. The others, Blackburn says, are still looking, have decided they aren't ready yet, or want to start training when their children are older.

Workshops run for 5 weeks

WORC's employability skills workshops have 10 or so students in each and run for 5 weeks. In all, students get 120 hours of vocational guidance, ranging from how to assess job skills and begin a job search to goal setting, clarifying values, and managing stress.

A large part of what WORC does is build self-confidence and self-esteem. Blackburn says her students have trouble finding out what they want to do because they have never worked outside the home. "Many," she says, "have low self-esteem and feel like failures."

Lou Gifford gained much from talking with other single parents at the workshops. "I got insights into problems I was having at home," she says. Participating in WORC activities also gave her insights into the working world. "It gave me the opportunity to find out about different kinds of occupations and who was hiring in these areas," she says.



As part of the workshops, Blackburn enlists the help of professionals, who explain opportunities in their various fields. Some come from government agencies, others from the private sector.

Gifford remembers the tour she took of Washington Institute of Technology. "The drafting department fascinated me," she recalls. "It was quiet, and they worked at their own pace. That's when I decided what I wanted to do. It's nice to know what you want to do with your life."

Once a student completes the 5-week workshop, ideally she goes on to a training program or the job market. WORC has funds for training, as long as it is vocational and no longer than 2 years.

"We promote some nontraditional jobs, like construction, drafting, and robotics, although most of our students still go into the usual fields—health care and business," Blackburn says.

WORC is one of several programs

WORC is not alone in its efforts to reach out to single parents and homemakers who want to get into the job market. WORC and 50 similar programs are funded through the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Bureau of Vocational Education.

For fiscal year 1988, Pennsylvania is spending \$800,000 on these programs. The state also receives federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education.

According to Al Marra, budget officer for the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE), \$63.1 million in federal funds are going to states for similar activities in 1988.

Nationwide, according to Marra, these basic state grants are used in a variety of ways to best serve individuals in each state. Marra says that for each \$1.00 of federal money, state and local entities are matching that

with \$10 of their own to help people gain job skills.

Jane Adair, program specialist at OVAE, says these are exciting times, with a new emphasis on helping people in need make positive changes in their lives.

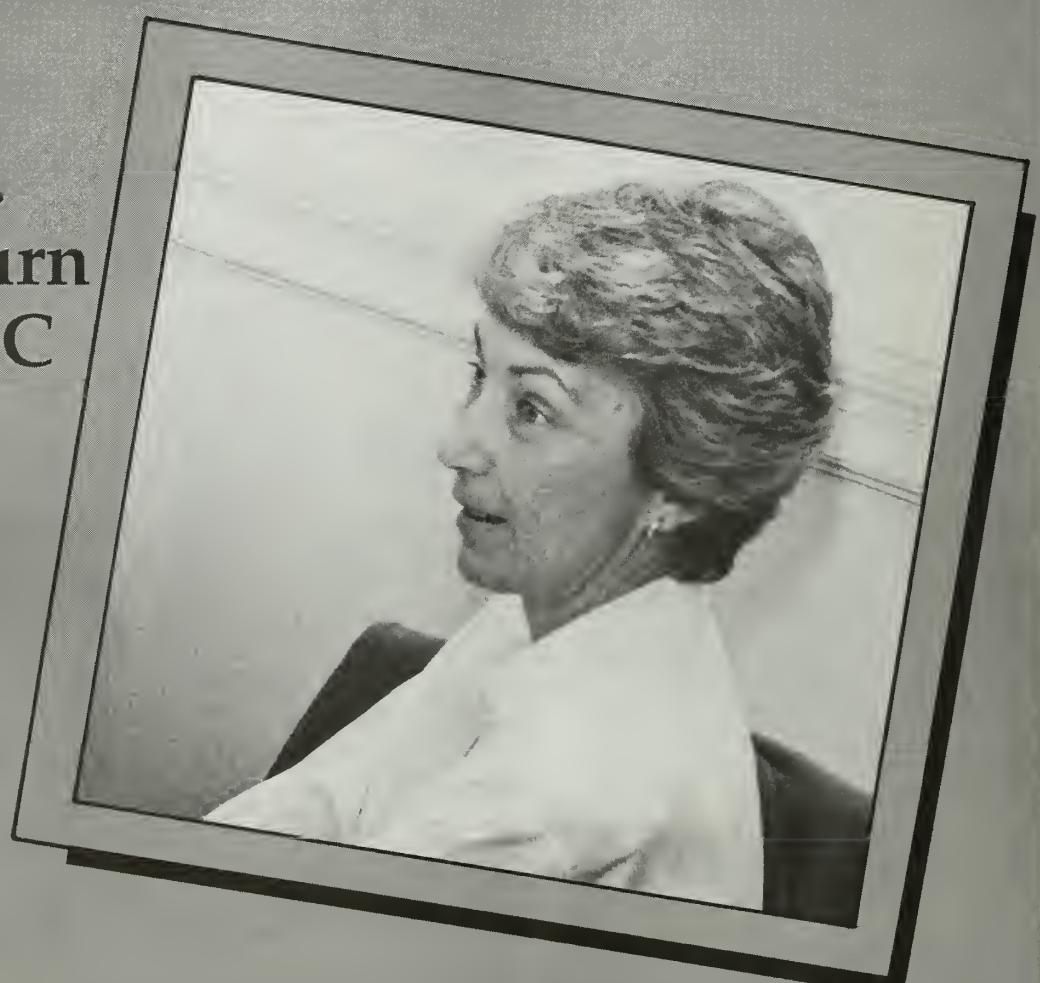
"Although it's a challenge to find the funds for such basic and necessary needs as child care and transportation for these people—both on a national and a local level—we're giving people the opportunity to get off welfare for good, to learn marketable skills and be self-sufficient."

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*article by Linda Feldman
photos by Joe Dunphy*

WORC Works... For: Joyce Blackburn Director of WORC

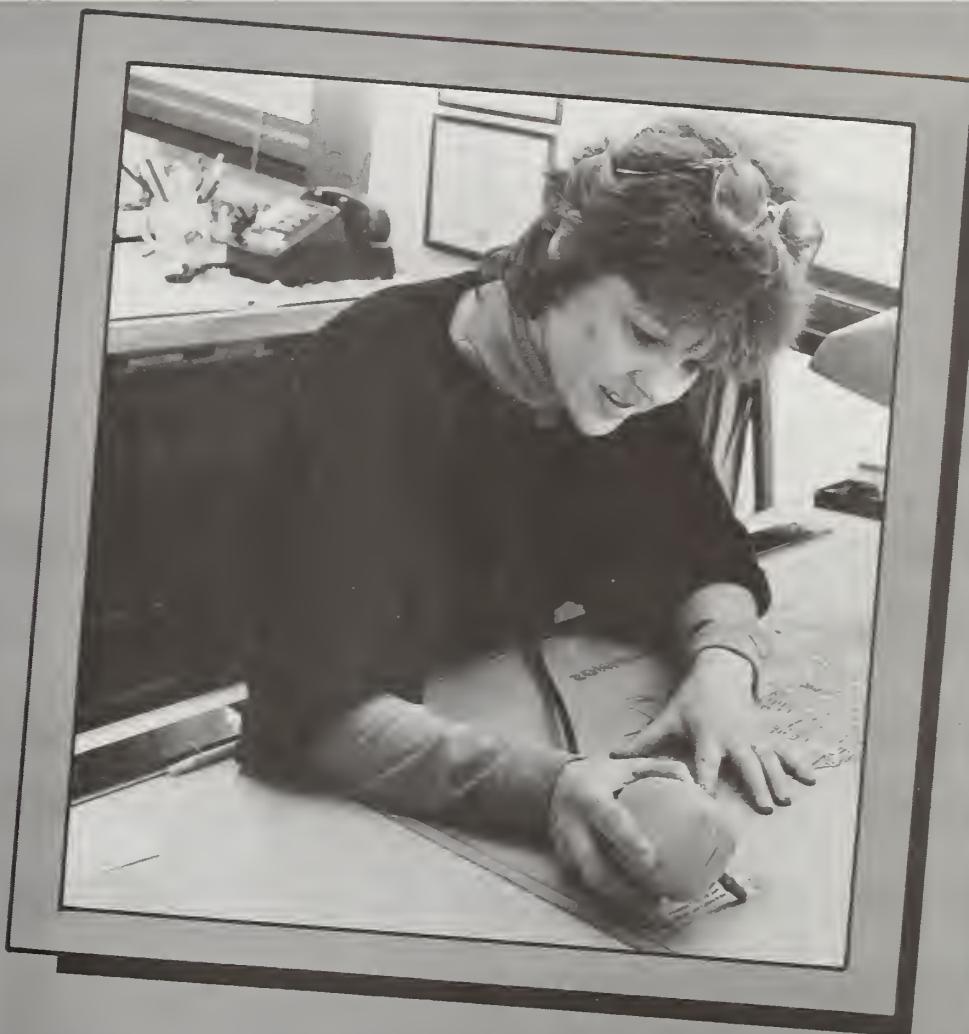
Blackburn entered the job market as an adult. When her youngest child was in senior high school, she got her bachelor's degree. As a long-time volunteer at the YWCA in Washington, Pennsylvania, she was asked to speak to a group at WORC. The next day she was asked to be a graduate assistant at WORC. She went back to graduate school, worked part-time at WORC, and became its director 2 years ago.



WORC Works... For: Lou Gifford

Gifford is a single parent living in Canonsburn, Pennsylvania. After high school, she worked in a sewing factory, a state hospital for the mentally ill, and sold Avon products. When she came to WORC for a workshop in 1987, she had not worked since 1972. She was on AFDC and food stamps.

WORC helped get her into a Job Partnership Act (JTPA) program. JTPA is paying for Gifford to get an associate's degree in drafting. She gets \$6.00 a day for expenses like transportation. She works part-time with a civil engineering firm. Gifford says, "WORC really changed my thinking."

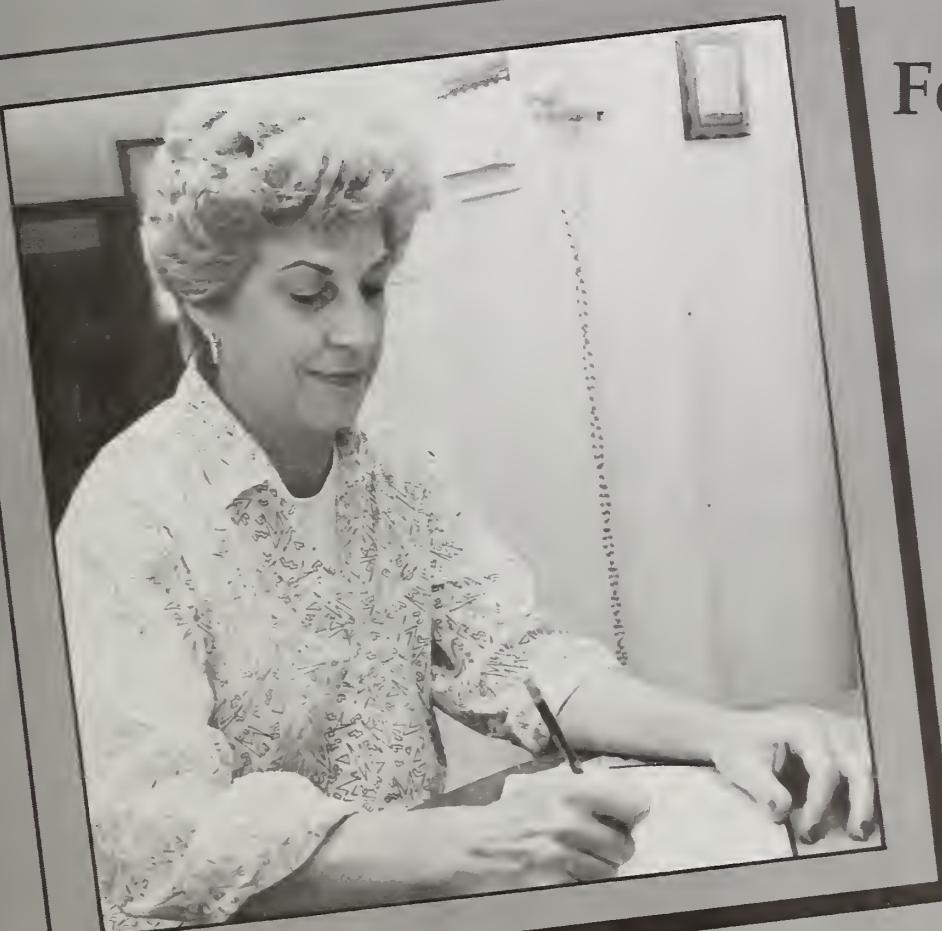


WORC Works... For: Joylene Markish

Markish worked for 10 years at a low-wage, dead-end job in a local store in Hickory, Pennsylvania. She stopped working to care for her elderly and ailing father. He had been a coal miner all his life and suffered from black lung disease. They lived off his pension until her father died. She had cleaned a few houses during that time, to get out and because she enjoyed cleaning.

Markish, living alone, with her children grown, saw a WORC poster in a doctor's office. She was there to treat stress. Markish went through a WORC workshop last year. Today she owns Classic Cleaning Service and employs two people. They clean 18 houses in the Washington, Pennsylvania, area, and the business is growing steadily.

"I was a really unhappy person and didn't know it," says Markish. "Today, I feel good about myself. I call the shots."



WORC Works... For: Sharon Bruno

Bruno is married and has four high-school-age children. Her husband, a former mechanic at a used car lot, has been laid off for a couple of years.

After seeing a brochure for WORC last year, Bruno decided to check it out. She stuck with the program, then trained to be a nursing assistant. Today, she works part-time at the Horizon Senior Care Center in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania.

She works on a floor where residents need constant care. She is on 24-hour call. She says, "I learned I could be more than just a housewife. I learned to have confidence in myself, which I didn't have before. That was the main thing—confidence."



Special School Gives Teen Mothers A Chance

Many of them are children themselves, some as young as 12, others as "old" as 19. What they have in common is they attend the Polly McCabe School in New Haven, Connecticut, and they are pregnant.

Teenage pregnancy is a national problem of growing concern. Teens deliver one out of six babies born in this country, and the majority choose to keep their babies. In New Haven, one out of five births are to teens under age 19, and in the "Hill" area of the city, one out of four births are to teens.

It is in the Hill district, a 3-mile area of extreme poverty, that the Polly McCabe School and the Hill Health Center (HHC) are working together to help teen mothers build better futures for themselves and their children.

Helping teens stay in school

"The primary purpose of McCabe is to prevent pregnant teens from dropping out of school," says Elizabeth Celotto, McCabe principal. "Teen parenthood limits a young woman's chances of leading a socially and economically independent and productive life."

The cost of teen parenthood is high not only to the teens but also to their

At New Haven's Hill Health Center, a staff member talks with a McCabe student (left) about the WIC program. Through WIC, the girl receives special supplemental foods and nutrition education.

Summer 1988





children and to society. The statistics are bleak:

- Only half of the teens who become parents before age 18 graduate from high school.
- Forty percent of teenage girls who drop out of school do so because of pregnancy or marriage.
- Teen mothers are twice as likely to be poor as other mothers, and teen parents earn half the lifetime earnings of women who wait until age 20 to have their first child.

"With a lot of help from other agencies and a very dedicated staff, we're working to increase the potential of these students," says Celotto.

An average of 200 girls attend the school each year and well below 10 percent drop out. Equally impressive is a repeat pregnancy rate of only 8 percent, with this year's rate running a low 6 percent.

"Our secondary goal," says Celotto, "is to help the teens deliver healthy babies." Here, too, the school is meeting its goal. In a poverty area where low birthweight is a serious problem, McCabe students tend to have babies whose average birthweights are

5½ pounds or more.

Supportive atmosphere helps in many ways

At the core of each of these successes is the supportive atmosphere fostered by both the Hill Health Center and McCabe. "The girls are very supportive of each other, and the staff is very supportive of the girls," says Celotto.

"Sometimes we take a lot of criticism from people on the outside who say we are giving them too much. But the problem is there, and I think the best way to deal with it is to be understanding and not judgmental."

The school, established in 1966 and named after a New Haven woman who dedicated her life to serving young women, is operated by the New Haven school system in conjunction with community agencies.

McCabe offers accredited academic courses in grades 6–12. The girls attend the school during pregnancy and are expected to return to their regular schools after giving birth.

At McCabe, the girls take the courses they would have taken in reg-

Hill Health Center WIC staff work closely with McCabe students and teachers. Here, WIC nutritionist Melissa Smith presents a class on nutrition during a visit to the school.

ular school plus a mandatory life skills class, which, in addition to preparing them for delivery, also covers a wide range of topics, including nutrition, parenting, and being a family manager.

"It is the best job I've ever had," says Adair Luciani, life skills teacher. "I'm teaching them something they need to know right now." Frequently, Luciani uses guest speakers from various community agencies to make her students aware of the help that is available to them and to address individual concerns.

Luciani has three main goals for her students. First, to have a good labor and delivery experience. She practices LaMaze exercises with them weekly. "Many of the girls are frightened by the delivery process and are worried they won't be able handle it, but many

come back after giving birth and say the exercises helped, which is very satisfying."

Luciani's second goal is to help the girls avoid repeat pregnancies. She emphasizes birth control and assertive behavior, but admits it is a hard message to deliver. "Society encourages sex in everything the girls see and hear," Luciani says. But the school's 6-percent repeat pregnancy rate indicates that the message is getting through.

Luciani's third goal is to increase the girls' confidence in their mothering abilities, which she hopes will ultimately prevent child abuse. "I let them see that there just isn't one right way to do things. I help them see that they have the ability to be good mothers."

Comments from current students reflect how vital McCabe's supportive

atmosphere is to them. "It is easier to make friends here because we are all here for the same reason," one girl says. "It is better than regular school," says another. "You're nobody there. Here, the teachers care about you and help you."

A former student says, "The reason I came back to school is because everyone thinks if you have a baby you won't finish school. In my case, I wanted to prove to people that I could do it."

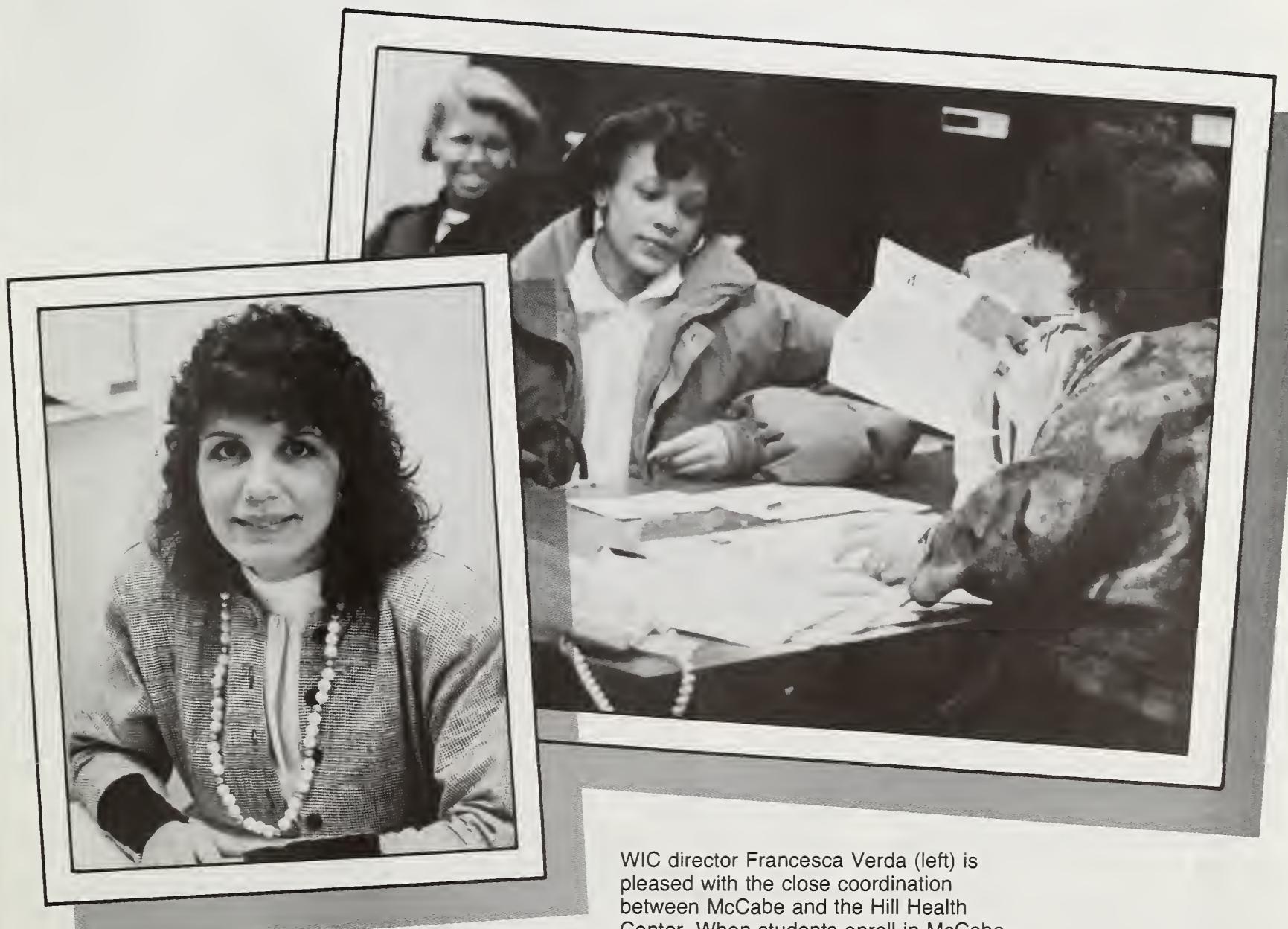
Upon their return to regular school, the girls are required to take a parenting class for which they are given academic credit. Additionally, each school has an advisor who sees the girls regularly to ensure a smooth transition. The advisor helps with any problems the girls encounter and acts as a buffer between the students and administration, if necessary.

WIC and health services available

Adjacent to McCabe is the Hill Health Center. Entering its twentieth year, the community-run center provides health care to low-income people.

"The community is oriented to coming here for help of any kind," says one outreach worker. "It is often the first place people come when things start falling apart for them." It is the same caring atmosphere that contributes to the successful relationships between the center's health service programs and McCabe.

On-site services include nutrition, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, dental care, and mental health services, all of which are available to McCabe students. Two programs, the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the Young Parents Out-



WIC director Francesca Verda (left) is pleased with the close coordination between McCabe and the Hill Health Center. When students enroll in McCabe, they are also enrolled in WIC.

reach Program (YPOP), play a special role in helping the teen mothers.

"WIC has been successful because it has been able to catch the teens early in their pregnancies through the excellent referral system we have between programs," says WIC director Francesca Verda.

The WIC staff work closely with McCabe. When a student enrolls in McCabe, she is also enrolled in WIC. Through WIC, which is administered cooperatively by USDA's Food and Nutrition Service and state and local health agencies, the young women get individually prescribed supplemental foods and nutrition counseling.

The WIC staff provide McCabe teachers with nutrition information and frequently present classes at McCabe on topics such as nutrition, prenatal care, problems during pregnancy, and infant nutrition.

"Studies have shown that the closer kids are to a program like this, the healthier they and their babies are," says Verda.

Reinforcing the goals of WIC and McCabe is the Young Parents Outreach Program (YPOP). A unique program of the Mental Health Clinic, YPOP has received national attention for its work with teen parents. The outreach workers for YPOP help teens cope with a multitude of problems and facilitate their enrollment in programs designed to assist them.

"We work closely with WIC because we find, initially, nutrition is perhaps the key element that makes the difference for these kids," says Renee Denkins, a senior outreach worker.

"Our kids are terribly at risk, and we work closely with them," she adds. "You have to love them, and if you don't, you can't work with them. You can't be judgmental."

Many graduates lead full lives

Before McCabe, teenage girls were required to leave public school by the twenty-eighth week of their pregnancies. If they wanted to continue their studies, they did so at home. Many dropped out.

Alumnae of McCabe say the school provided a caring atmosphere that helped them feel better about themselves. Recently, about 12 former students formed a group committed to helping current students stay in

school.

"We are successful women who have achieved our goals," says group member Cheryl Atkinson, who attended McCabe twice but managed to graduate on time with her class and go on to receive associate degrees in data processing and computer programming, and business administration. Another member of the group is currently an assistant vice president of a bank.

The group recently visited McCabe to talk with the girls. "For many of the girls, their pregnancies aren't real yet, but they have to realize it is no longer just their own lives they are dealing with," says Atkinson.

"They've chosen a different road. They've chosen adulthood, and now they have to be prepared to provide for their infants. That is what the group is for—to help them see there are options available to them."

The McCabe teachers, WIC staff, YPOP outreach workers, HHC staff and former students are all working together to help these teen mothers build better futures for themselves and their children.

Are they successful? Only time will tell with each girl. McCabe students are delivering healthier babies, the majority are returning to school, and the incidence of repeat attendance is declining.

"It's all about caring," says Francesca Verda. "They know there is a place where they are cared about and not judged. It makes them want to continue."

For more information on the McCabe school, contact:

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*article and photos
by Cynthia Tackett*

From an open window, a perfect spring day breezes across the Chicago Loop classroom. Twenty young men and women nervously sit, dressed in their best business attire. One by one, they walk to the front desk and introduce themselves to volunteer instructor Veronica Barney, who takes them through a practice job interview.

For 19-year-old Eloise Bullock and her classmates, this is one of the most difficult tasks required of them by Jobs For Youth, a nonprofit agency that places low-income youths in unsubsidized private-sector jobs.

Bullock, a welfare-dependent mother of a 1-year-old, hopes to join nearly 1,000 successful Jobs for Youth graduates who last year were able to turn to work instead of welfare. Jobs for Youth is supported by more than 200 businesses and corporations and places graduates with more than 350 local employers.

Team approach gets results

Julie Dillon, director of volunteer services for Jobs for Youth, attributes her agency's team-oriented approach of counseling, placement, and follow-up for its 10-year track record of successful job placements.

"Everyone gets 2 years of Jobs for Youth service from our team of 100 volunteer tutors and counselors, as well as our full-time staff," says Dillon.

"When you walk in here, you are immediately assigned to an employment counselor," she explains. Everyone is then enrolled in a 3-week workshop taught by a variety of volunteers.

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Chicago Group Helps Kids "Earn" Jobs

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"When you walk in here, you are immediately assigned to an employment counselor," she explains. Everyone is then enrolled in a 3-week workshop taught by a variety of volunteers from local businesses.

The 3-week pre-employment workshop—3 hours daily—covers career development, how to complete job applications, body language, dressing for interviews, language skills, interviewing techniques, and job-keeping skills.

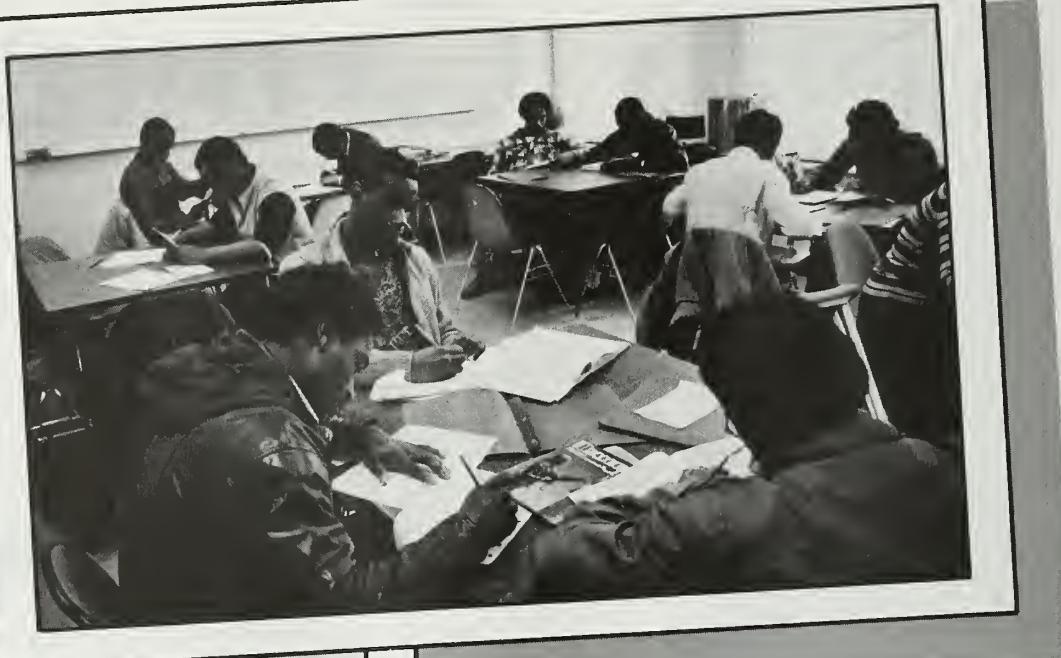
"Emphasis is on not only getting a job, but keeping a job," explains Dillon. "Exposure to successful role models is key to our success."



At a special graduation ceremony, Jobs for Youth students gain recognition for completing an intensive 3-week pre-employment training program.

Volunteers such as a bank vice president, account executives from ad agencies, and executives like the U.S. Department of Treasury's Veronica Barney, provide positive role models for students as well as expert instruc-

Students attending the Learning Center at Jobs for Youth have an opportunity to raise their academic levels and prepare for the G.E.D. exam. One student who did this is Alex Guerrero (seated), pictured here with center director Gary Paprocki.



tion and guidance.

"I tell them an interview is like combat," says Barney. "You've got to prepare and practice."

Students matched with counselors

Following the 3-week workshop,

each student is matched with an individual vocational counselor to assess the student's strengths and weaknesses, employability, and career interests.

"We work closely with students to overcome barriers to employment,

such as attitudes toward work, low self-esteem, and lack of day care for young parents," says Dillon.

Everyone entering the program is also tested to ascertain their reading and math competency levels. Those who test below the sixth grade level register for the G.E.D. (Graduate Equivalency Degree) exam and attend the Jobs for Youth Learning Center.

Tim Brown, 19, found a job in restaurant maintenance through Jobs for Youth. He comes to the Learning Center every day after work to study for his G.E.D. exam. Brown sees his restaurant job as temporary and plans to go to college or join the military.

"I've really learned to communicate with people," says Brown. "Everything I was asked in my real job interview I learned how to handle here," he says.

Others, like Earett Fisher, landed a job in the maintenance department at the American Red Cross headquarters in Chicago. Mercantile Exchange employee Alex Guerrero enrolled in Jobs for Youth Learning Center and earned his G.E.D. studying part-time. Another young man is now working to become a gemologist at a local jeweler, while a young woman secured a position as a trader's assistant in a brokerage office.

Mac Olsen, Jobs for Youth director of communications, says a real measure of success is in the quality of jobs the young people earn. "When we first started out 10 years ago," he says,

"more than 50 percent of our jobs were in fast foods. Now, that's less than 15 percent."

Local businesses make this possible

Strong support from local businesses and employers enables Jobs for Youth to maintain quality job placements.

Jobs for Youth Employment Services representative Kay Trotter points to the Youth Training and Development program at Kraft, Inc., corporate headquarters in suburban Glenview, Illinois.

"The Kraft program is designed to give our graduates 6 weeks of practical working experience in a corporate setting," says Trotter. Kraft has been able to hire more than 40 Jobs for Youth graduates.

"Our kids are not promised a job, they have to earn it," says Trotter. "They have an opportunity to let Kraft know how good they are."

But teaching their students how to take advantage of that opportunity to prove themselves often presents a challenge for staff and volunteers at Jobs for Youth.

"Most of the kids come in here with

battered self-esteem," says Liz Hersh, director of youth services. Hersh says Jobs for Youth helps kids build confidence through discipline, hard work, and accomplishment.

"Just walking into this big building, going up the elevator, talking to strangers on the phone and in person, conforming to the dress code—that builds confidence," she says.

"It's also self-selection. They screen themselves out. They have to punch in on the time clock for the workshop, and unexcused lateness or absences mean they're out of the program. We demand a high level of performance."

Performance is also what the Illinois Department of Public Aid hopes to tap from a recently signed employment and training contract with Jobs for Youth. The contract, which calls for Jobs for Youth to place 75 public aid recipients in jobs, was negotiated with Illinois' Project Chance, the largest welfare-to-work program in the country.

With minority youth employment running nearly 50 percent in large

urban areas like Chicago, the staff at Jobs for Youth have no illusions about their overall impact on the problem.

"We received 1,100 calls in 3 days after running some public service radio announcements recently," says Liz Hersh. "For the ones who actually come in here, it really shows they're motivated. And for those kids who need a break and have a strong desire to work and a willingness to change, Jobs for Youth can make a difference."

Recent enrollee Michael Burger, 18, agrees. "Even my parents have noticed the improvement in me," he says. "I'm up early every morning, really motivated, and full of hope."

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*article by Lawrence Rudman
photos by Jobs for Youth*

Jobs for Youth graduate Earett Fisher now works in the vehicle maintenance department at Red Cross headquarters in Chicago.



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